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FIELD MARSHAL WILLIAM J. SLIM:
THE GREAT GENERAL AND
THE BREAKING OF THE GLASS CEILING

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL EDWARD P. EGAN
United States Army

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FIELD MARSHAL WILLIAM J. SLIM: THE GREAT GENERAL AND THE BREAKING OF THE GLASS CEILING

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Edward P. Egan

United States Army

Professor Jay Luvaas

Project Advisor

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Field Marshal William J. Slim

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In the Beginning

BY COMMAND I MEAN THE GENERAL'S QUALITIES OF WISDOM, SINCERITY, HUMANITY, COURAGE AND STRICTNESS. THESE FIVE ARE THE VIRTUES OF THE GENERAL. HENCE THE ARMY REFERS TO HIM AS "THE RESPECTED ONE".

SUN TZU

Field Marshal William J. Slim was one of the finest generals of World War II. In fact, many historians considered him to be one of the two or three best generals of the war. His accomplishments are truly staggering:

- He inflicted on the Japanese their greatest land defeat ever.¹

And he did it under the most diverse and trying conditions of any theater in World War II.

- His soldiers fought in some of the most remote terrain in the world, from the Himalayas to the steamy, disease ridden jungles of Burma, with the annual monsoon thrown in for extra measure.

- His theater was lowest on the totem pole for supplies and men, and it remained that way throughout the war.

- He fought against one of the most tenacious opponents of World War II, an enemy of whom Slim said: "We talk a lot about fighting to the last man and the last round, but the Japanese soldier is the only one who actually does it."²

- He commanded an army that at one any one time consisted of up to six nationalities, speaking eight different languages, and sustaining combat for over three and a half years.³

- He commanded in a very delicate political-military environment that included the usual strong personalities--three of whom were the dynamic and often misguided Lord Louis Mountbatten, the obstinate 'visionary' Major General Orde Wingate, and one of the most colorful, if not one of the most acerbic, senior leaders of the war, U.S. General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell.

- Twice he had to lead British troops on retreats from the Japanese--one extending a thousand miles, the longest in the annals of the British Army. Both times he brought his soldiers out as a fighting force. His own words poignantly recall the ordeal: "All of them, British, Indian and Gurkha, were gaunt and ragged as scarecrows. Yet, as they trudged behind their surviving officers in groups pitifully small, they carried their arms and kept their ranks, they were recognizable as fighting units. They might look like scarecrows, but they looked like soldiers too."⁴

- He conducted four of the most classic operational campaigns of World War II--the battle of the Second Arakan; the battles of Imphal and Kohima; the capture of Mandalay-Meiktila; and the pursuit to Rangoon. In each case, his generalship was the deciding factor.

- He demonstrated a degree of flexibility uncommon for a general in any war, to say nothing of World War II. He overcame unforeseen problems by devising and applying new solutions. He and his subordinates gave a textbook example of how it is possible to discard comfortable but outdated assumptions and alter long-accepted methods to meet the challenge of generalship.⁵ This was especially true of his novel use of air power for close air support, resupply and large troop movements throughout his theater of operations.

- He was universally recognized as possessing all the traits of a great leader: "kindly and approachable with a quiet sense of humor, he possessed tremendous fortitude and determination and, in all walks of life, he inspired the confidence given to a great leader."⁶

- He was as successful after the war as during it. In fact, he was so successful as Governor-General of Australia that "the prime minister gave it as his opinion that there never had been two people who achieved a greater hold on the affections and regard of the Australian people than had Sir William and Lady Slim."⁷

- For all his accomplishments and well-deserved recognition, he remained steadfastly a simply good, decent human being. All accounts of him portray a humble, decent man, almost too good to be true. "When a memorial service was held for him in 1976 (30 years after the war), over 2000 of his former soldiers in the 14th Army came to honor the memory of the commander they affectionately called 'Uncle Bill'. They all spoke about fighting *with* him, not *under* him. This unusual legacy of regard, unmatched by any other wartime leader, was left behind by a man whose personality was never blatant, but was rooted in the quieter virtues of integrity, humanity and reliability."⁸

- Finally, he wrote "the best written of all books published by those who held a senior command in the Second World War--*Defeat into Victory*."⁹

For all his greatness, Field Marshal Slim was not a self-made man. Despite the fact that throughout his career he was consistently marked as a leader with great potential, he achieved positions of increased responsibility only through the concerted efforts of several peers and a few superiors. Despite the fact that he was responsible for some of Britain's great feats of arms in World

War II, he was relieved twice, once immediately after his greatest victory. And, despite the fact that he is considered by many to be the epitome of the military leader, his life and achievements are studied by very few in the military, especially in the U.S. Army. Why? Why was he fired? Why is he not studied as a model of military leadership? Why did he consistently have to break through the "glass ceiling" to achieve positions of senior leadership in the British Army?

This paper will first consider what made Field Marshal Slim such a consummate military leader. His character, style and personality will be measured against those traits or qualities necessary for the successful strategic leader and general. Then, events from Field Marshal Slim's life will be compared against these traits or qualities believed requisite for generalship and strategic leadership. Finally, we will address two closely related issues: Slim's firing, and his encounters with the "glass ceiling", which seemed always to be between him and positions of senior leadership in the British Army.

In order to fully address these questions, some background information will be provided throughout the discourse to give a better understanding of the paper's thesis: a brief overview of Slim's life, the conditions in Burma in which he fought during most of World War II, and a definition of the "glass ceiling". First, to Field Marshal Slim's life.

The Field Marshal's Bio

William Joseph Slim was born in Bristol, England, on 6 August 1891. Soon after his birth, his family moved to Birmingham, where he received his education through the Catholic school system. Although Slim felt a calling to an army career early on, his parents were neither rich enough to send him to Sandhurst nor poor enough to allow him to join the army as an enlisted man. (This matter of barely adequate funds would plague Slim all his life, and impelled his endeavors to write for money.) He therefore took a job in a local industry. But he also joined the Birmingham University officer cadet corps (English ROTC), even though he was not a student at the University.

At the outbreak of the First World War, he was commissioned in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. During that war he saw service first at Gallipoli in 1915, where he was seriously wounded, and, after recovering from his wounds, in Iraq in 1916, where he received the Military Cross for bravery. At Gallipoli Slim saw the famous Gurkhas for the first time. "Seeing the dash of the 8th Gurkhas, Lt. William Slim, then a subaltern in a territorial battalion, decided that day to apply to join them."¹⁰ He obtained a regular commission in 1919 and transferred to the Indian Army, wherein he served with the Gurkhas off and on for the next twenty years.

Slim made his mark first as a combat leader, then he excelled in the British Army's education system. He attended the Indian Staff College in 1926, and later served as an instructor at the British Staff College from 1934 to 1937. In 1937, he was one of the few officers chosen to attend the Imperial Defense

College. In each of these school assignments Slim was not only a first class student--he finished first in the Indian Staff College. Further, he was widely admired by all who came in contact with him for his keen mind, natural leadership, and humanity.

In 1937, Slim assumed command of the 2/7th Gurkhas. By the outbreak of World War II in 1939, he was a brigadier commanding the 10th Brigade of the 5th Indian Division in Sudan. In his first test as a senior leader, Slim's Brigade was given the mission of driving the Italians out of the Ethiopian-Sudanese border town of Gallabat. Slim was successful, but only after a hard fight. This encounter provided many lessons that he would put to good effect over the next four years. In May 1941, he assumed command of the 10th Indian Division in Iraq where he conducted a brief but successful campaign against the Vichy French force culminating in the battle of Deir-ez-Zor.

By March 1942 he had been promoted to Lieutenant General. He then received the call to Burma, where he assumed command of the British and Burmese forces fighting the Japanese. From March to May 1942, he led his Burcorps on a one thousand mile retreat through Burma to India, losing over half his force in the process. Once in India, he assumed command of XV Corps and undertook a concerted effort to retrain his soldiers to fight the Japanese on equal terms. They trained to fight in the jungle, to hold fast when surrounded, and to rely on the air force for resupply. In late '42, Slim again was called upon to lead British and Indian forces in a retreat as a result of the disastrous first Arakan campaign.

In October 1943, Slim was given command of 14th Army and assigned to lead British and Indian forces in the reconquest of Burma. Despite extensive planning by the British to retake Burma, the Japanese struck first. In February '44, they invaded India, first during the Second Battle of Arakan, then at the ferocious battles of Kohima and Imphal. In all three of these battles, Slim inflicted a crushing defeat on the Japanese 15th Army, costing them over 65,000 casualties.

Following a resupply of his forces, Slim began the reconquest of Burma in January of '45. His initial plan sought to entrap the Japanese forces west of the great bend in the Irrawaddy river and defeat them there with his armor forces. But the Japanese did not cooperate. They decided to defend from the east/north bank of the river. Slim quickly read the Japanese intentions and adjusted his plan accordingly. Instead of having two corps strike across the Irrawaddy north of Mandalay, Slim diverted one corps to move west of the Irrawaddy, building roads as it went. Then it crossed the river south of Mandalay and struck at the key Japanese communications and logistics center at Meiktila. To carry out this maneuver, Slim devised an elaborate deception plan to fool the Japanese into believing that both corps were still north of Mandalay. Slim's plan worked to perfection. By March 1945, both Mandalay and Meiktila had fallen to the 14th Army, and Slim had effectively crushed the Japanese Army in Burma.

Having been promoted to General in May '45, Slim ended the war as the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces SouthEast Asia. Then he oversaw the Allied occupation of Malaya and Indochina.

After the war, Slim briefly retired from the army to become an executive with the Railway only to be called out of retirement, promoted to Field Marshal

and made Chief of the Imperial General Staff. In 1953 he began a highly successful seven year assignment as the Governor-General of Australia. During this period he published his famous chronicles of his Burma experiences, *Defeat Into Victory*. From 1960-1963, he served in a variety of executive positions. In 1963, he became the Constable of Windsor Castle. Field Marshal Slim died in London 14 December 1970.¹¹

What Makes a General

Quests for the defining traits or characteristics of successful strategic leaders or generals yield endless lists. However, a core group of traits seems to succinctly capture the essence of senior leadership.

The strategic leader is not always a general and visa versa, yet the traits of the strategic leader are usually common to both. They generally fall into three categories. First is the strategic environment, which is characterized by ambiguity, limited time and resources, competing interests from several factions, and an interdependence on other environments, such as the interplay between the political, social and military arenas. Next are the strategic leader's tasks. These include developing a vision for success and a plan to achieve the vision, setting priorities, establishing values, and setting the tone and climate for an organization. Finally, there are the strategic leader competencies. He must be able to see the big picture, must be technically competent, must tolerate ambiguity, and must communicate well, both verbally and in writing.

Generals and strategic leaders perform similar tasks, but general's jobs encompass more--much, much more.

There can be little difference of opinion that generalship is one of the most difficult arts in which to excel. First, because the attributes required to master the art cover such a wide field; second, because, unlike most professions, it involves not only a responsibility for the lives of human beings but it may be that a national catastrophe is brought about by a general's decision; third, because these decisions must so often be made on indeterminate factors and inadequate information. The whole edifice of planning, built up after long and careful thought, can be brought down in ruins by circumstances over which the architect has no control, such as unexpected changes in the political sphere, unpredictable moves by the enemy or even the weather.¹²

While there is no one definitive list of the characteristics of the successful general, Field Marshal Lord Wavell has come very close in his book *Generals and Generalship*. In a series of speeches given at Cambridge University in 1941, he attempted to "explain the qualities necessary for a general and the conditions in which he has to exercise his calling."¹³ Additionally, Slim himself outlined the traits required for the senior leader to exercise "Higher Command in War" in a speech given to the Command and General Staff College on 8 April 1952. Along with Wavell's comments, Slim has provided a near definitive list.

Field Marshal Wavell says the first quality necessary in a general is robustness, the ability to stand the shocks of war. This quality calls for physical and moral courage, physical fitness, the will to win and a determination never to acknowledge defeat.¹⁴ Moral courage refers to that "inner conscience which gives a man the courage of his convictions and tells him what is right to say and to do whatever the outcome to himself."¹⁵ The spirit of generalship must be supported by physical strength and endurance: "Physical and mental fitness is requisite to enable a general to stand up to the strain of war induced by the rapidly changing situations of the modern battlefield, particularly when the campaign is fought in unusual circumstances of climate and terrain against a ruthless and highly trained enemy."¹⁶

Professional knowledge then enables the general to have a sound grasp of strategy, tactics and administration. This can be summed up as the general's capacity to make a careful and studied approach to battle.¹⁷ Wavell asserts that a general's administrative capabilities are indispensable, for battle "begins with matter of administration, which is the real crux of generalship."¹⁸ Further, "without a sound and elastic administrative plan, a campaign is doomed."¹⁹ The

plan must then be tenaciously executed: "But above all is the will to win and the determination to see the plan through to a successful completion."²⁰

Also, the general must know his soldiers. He must know how to train them and adapt his plan according to their capabilities. He must inspire them and gain their confidence and, if possible, their affection by showing them he will not put them into battle without giving them all that is in his power to help them win.²¹ And he must know that different nationalities demand different treatment.²²

While a striking personal appearance may enhance generalship, it is not a requirement. What is required is that the general have the courage, both physical and moral, to show he is willing to share his soldier's lot, regardless of the circumstances. And he must be a stern and fair disciplinarian.²³

War is a grim business, so the general must have a sense of humor. This is especially true when things are darkest and the general's humor can have an effect far beyond expectations.²⁴

The general must possess integrity as well. His word must be his bond. Added to this must be a readiness to give to others the credit that is their due.²⁵

The general must be good "picker of subordinates". He must be able to put the right person in the right job by being a good judge of character.²⁶ In the actual exercise of command, the general must be able to give his subordinate commanders and staff clear, concise orders. Then he must supervise, where necessary, to assure compliance with his orders and directions.²⁷

The general and the statesman or politician live in very different worlds. The general must understand that the statesman answers to his constituents, and the statesmen must understand the general's opportunities of practicing his trade in peace are few and artificial. That each should understand the other is essential for the conduct of war.²⁸

Finally, Wavell says there is one other quality that separates the really great commander from the ordinary general--luck. "The general must have the spirit of adventure, a touch of the gambler in him. As Napoleon said 'if the art of war consisted merely in not taking risks glory would be at the mercy of very mediocre talent.' A bold general may be lucky, but no general can be lucky unless he is bold."²⁹

In summing up generalship, Wavell cites Voltaire's praise of Marlborough: "that calm courage in the mist of tumult, that serenity of soul in danger, which is the greatest gift of nature for command."³⁰

Slim offers a plain-spoken overview of generalship: "Command is that mixture of example, persuasion and compulsion by which you get men to do what you want them to do, even if they do not want to do it themselves.". He adds that "command is a personal thing."³¹ Accordingly, he approaches senior leadership from these perspectives: the commander, the headquarters, and contact between the commander and his command.

The first quality the commander must possess is will power--deciding not only what is to be done, but seeing that it is done. The commander must have sufficient will power to resist the opposition from his well meaning staff, especially the logisticians, and from his allies. This will power must be based on moral courage: the ability to do what is right without bothering too much about the effect on oneself. The second quality necessary in a commander is judgment--the ability to make decisions and select subordinates, and then to empower them. Next, the commander must have flexibility of mind, an ability to adapt himself to changing situations. He enjoined the commander to ensure that such flexibility did not become vacillation. Slim said the commander must possess

knowledge--knowledge of his soldiers, tactics and operations, logistics, administration, and the enemy. This last point was especially significant, since Slim saw battle as largely a struggle between the wills of the opposing commanders. Slim lastly cites the commander's need for integrity. If a commander is honest with his men, he will have their confidence even when things aren't going right.³²

Slim turns next to the headquarters. He said a commander has a right to demand two things from a headquarters: information and suggestions. A headquarters should consider itself a servant of the troops; its prime function should be to translate quickly and accurately the will of the commander. Slim again emphasized the commander's necessity to pick competent subordinates, especially his chief of staff or administration, operations planners and his intelligence officer. Lastly, the commander should ensure that his headquarters did not turn into a traveling circus. It should be only large enough to do the job with the minimum amount of people.³³

Finally, Slim turned to the relationship between the commander and his command. He emphasizes that, while the commander might not know every soldier in his command (and this is especially true the bigger the command), every soldier ought to know the commander, at least by sight. Thus, the commander must visit the troops and talk with them, not *at* them. Slim stresses that the commander should have something meaningful to say and believe what he was saying himself. When things go wrong, Slim warned that the commander cannot look for scapegoats. If a subordinate was clearly at fault, then the commander, and only the commander, should sack the subordinate. However, if a subordinate was over-eager, took too much risk or was a little too pugnacious, then the commander should give him another chance.³⁴

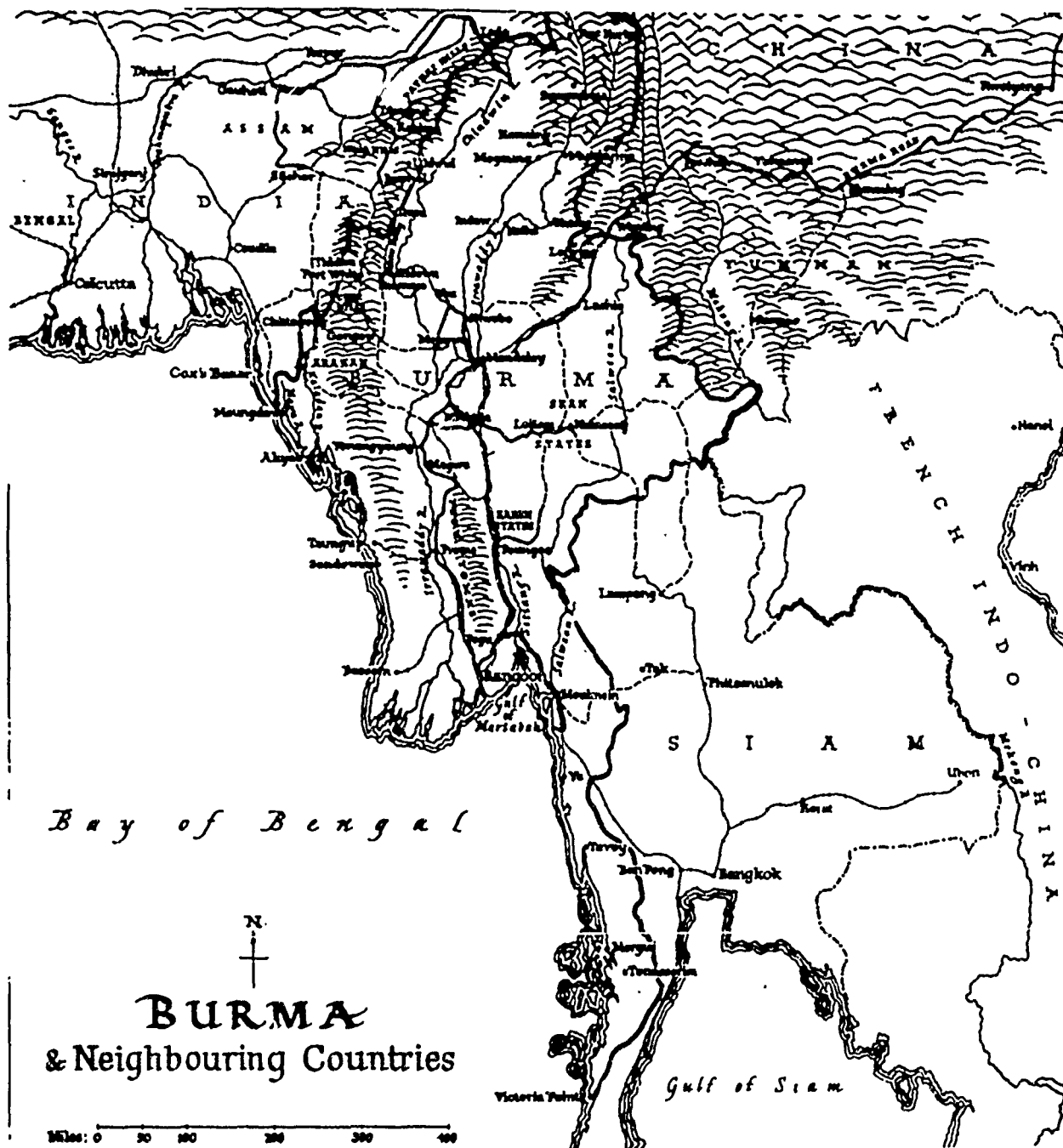
Slim finally returns to his initial point, that command is a personal thing. He implored future commanders to be true to themselves throughout their careers because no imitation was ever a masterpiece.³⁵

Slim's generalship must be viewed initially in the context of the geographic aspect of his strategic environment:

Burma (See Map 1), approximately the size of France and Belgium combined, can be divided into three distinct areas. First, the rice-producing country of the south, stretching from Rangoon as far north as a line east and west through Prome—a network of rivers, canals and waterways—with jungle-covered mountains on the flanks and in the center; it was at any time unsuitable for vehicles, except on the roads, particularly during the monsoon. Second is the 'dry belt', terminating north of the Shwebo plain, open and dusty, with little or no water away from the big rivers, but ideal for the employment of armour since conditions are similar to those of North Africa. Third, the tangled mass of mountains and teak forests of the north which continue up to the frontier with China—a wild, undeveloped country, passable only on foot or elephant unless roads are constructed. The whole grain of the country, that is to say the mountains and rivers, runs north to south, so that a journey from east to west entails the crossing of a series of wide natural obstacles. Main roads are scarce and very few are macadam overall; normally the center only is tarmac, just wide enough for one vehicle, with an earth surface on either side on which travel the slow, creaking bullock carts. All other roads can be termed cart tracks, inches deep in dust in dry weather and quagmires in the monsoon. Besides the few roads, the main railway line from Rangoon to Myitkyina and one or two branch lines, there are the two great rivers, the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin. These were essential means of communication before the war, and it was in the wood-burning steamers of the Irrawaddy flotilla that many passengers and heavy goods traveled from Rangoon to Mandalay and beyond and up the Chindwin valley, while in the monsoon rafts of teak logs floated down the rivers to the saw mills in the south. From Rangoon two routes, road and rail, lead north to Mandalay, the eastern route through Pegu, Toungoo and Meiktila, and the western route through Tharrawaddy, Prome and Myingyan. Between them, for most of the way, lie the Pegu Yomas, a wide, mountainous area covered with thick jungle and with few lateral communications. To reach Rangoon from the west involved a journey by sea or by air, since there was no land route from India into Burma other than the 70-mile, fair weather track leading from Imphal in Manipur State to Tamu at the northern end of the Kabaw

valley, notorious for all the virulent and deadly diseases of the East, especially malaria. The construction of a road along this alignment was one of the first steps ordered by General Wavell on assuming responsibility for the defence of Burma, and this was bound to take a long time. Usually, the middle of May marks the onset of the monsoon: then the rains pour down incessantly, making large-scale movement impossible except by water, rail or along the macadam roads, a situation which continues until towards the middle of October. As will be seen, this date of the middle of May had a vital bearing on the timing of the operations of 1942 for, once the monsoon set in, the tracks and paths through the Kabaw valley and on to India would be quite impassable. As regards the inhabitants, by far the largest proportion of the population was Burman and although mainly inhabiting the central and southern areas, they could be found in most low-lying parts of the country. The majority were peace-loving and only asked to be allowed to till their fields and live quietly in their villages, but there was a minority which actively collaborated with the Japanese, either politically or by taking up arms against the British.³⁶

Without doubt, Slim operated over formidable terrain and in a difficult climate. Let us consider his strategic leadership then in this operational context. Much of what we know about his performance comes from his own personal histories of the war in Burma, *Defeat into Victory* and its companion volume *Unofficial History*. Whereas careervise Slim was not a self-made man, historically he is just that. We shall determine his conduct on the basis, in large part, of his own recollections of how the war was fought in Burma. We thus rely much on his impeccable integrity and meticulous accountability to learn of his wartime achievements.



MAP 1

Slim as a Strategic Leader

Strategic Environment. The strategic environment in which Slim operated was the epitome of ambiguity, limited resources, competing interest and interdependence on other arenas. It is imperative to understand this environment to fully understand the magnitude of Slim's accomplishments.

To begin with, the Japanese had invaded Burma for two reasons: to cut the Allied land route to China by capturing the Burma road, and to secure their western flank and protect their conquest of Singapore, Malaya and Indochina.³⁷ Even as the British were frantically trying to defend Burma, their own strategic goals were far from clear. Slim acknowledges that he took over a force of two depleted divisions without any guidance. Were his forces, then dubbed Burcorps, "going somewhere to stage a last-ditch stand to hold part of Burma? Were we going to concentrate on getting the army, by a series of withdrawals, back to India intact? Or, were we hoping that the Chinese (under the command of LTG Stilwell) would give us enough strength to counter-attack successfully?"³⁸ The British never answered the questions for themselves. Instead, the Japanese did it for them by driving them back into India.

Nor did the strategic goals and objectives become any clearer after the fall of Burma. From the moment of its capture, the Allies--the U.S. and Great Britain--continually disagreed on the strategic direction the war should take in Burma. The Americans wanted to recapture the Burma Road so that the land route to China could be reopened, while the British were keen to get back their old empire in Southeast Asia and thereby have a major say in the affairs of the Pacific.³⁹

Throughout most of World War II, until the capture of the Marshall Islands (February 1944), the Americans saw China as one of the keys to the defeat of Japan. They knew the Japanese had over one million men in China and they wanted the Chinese to keep these Japanese troops tied down so they could not be used against the Americans in their central Pacific drive to take Japan. Additionally, the Americans wanted to use airbases in China to conduct a strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese home islands.

This strategic difference would plague the two allies throughout the war. It clearly influenced the amount of resources they would allocate to this theater. By early '42, the British were already starting to scrape the bottom of the resource barrel. Since they were hard at war in several theaters, Burma got scant attention. The resource-rich Americans also kept Burma low on their priority list. Even when they did send forces and supplies to the region, they usually put great constraints on their use by anybody other than American forces. This was especially true of the transport aircraft used to fly supplies over the Himalayan "hump" to China. Slim constantly faced significant shortages in men and materials of all kinds, especially food that could be consumed by all of Slim's troops and still meet the many and varied religious requirements of the different sects in his command. He was responsible for a front that ran from Arakan in the south to Ledo in the north, a distance of over 600 miles as the crow flies. Slim gives a fine description of his supply route (See Map 2):

From the Indian side, the fighting areas could be reached but only circuitously--rail way and river; there were no through roads. From Calcutta the broad-gauge railway, for about half of the distance a single track, ran for 235 miles to Parbatipur. Here hordes of coolies unloaded the wagons and noisily transferred the contents to the ramshackle meter gauge train that, if all had gone well, would be waiting. This then wandered up the Brahmaputra Valley to the ferry at Pandu, 450 miles from Calcutta. The coaches and wagons were

uncoupled and pushed, with much clanking and banging, on to barges. A slow river crossing and the laborious process was repeated in reverse on the opposite bank. Over at last and reassembled, the train rattled monotonously on to Dimapur, the terminus for the Central front, over 600 miles from Calcutta. If bound for the Northern front, it continued its journey, even more slowly, to Ledo, more than 800 miles from Calcutta.⁴⁰

Likewise, he depicts his command's logistical situation in October 1943, eighteen months after his retreat back into India. In a 30 October 1943 letter to General Headquarters (India), which was responsible for logistical support of the British and India forces on the border of Burma, Slim stated:

The supply situation as regards certain commodities in the Army area is so serious that I consider it will affect active operations and should, therefore, be brought to the attention of the Commander-in-Chief [Gen. Sir Claude J. E. Auchinleck] and the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief 11 Army Group [Gen. Sir George Giffard]. . In general terms instead of holding a tonnage of 65,000 tons which is the target for the supply depot in the area, only some 47,000 tons were held on 26 Oct 43, thereby giving an *over-all* [Slim's italics] deficiency of 27%.⁴¹

Addressing the supply situation area by area, Slim noted that in the Arakan district of Burma there was no hay for animal transport or clarified butter in forward areas. In the area forward of the Manipur Road British troops had no meat, nor were authorized substitutes available. For Indian troops in the same vicinity there was no meat, no milk, no butter, the latter two staple items of the Indian diet. Moreover, when tinned foods did come forward, often 50 percent was spoiled. Subsequently, in 4 Corps area the medical authorities had already reported that troops were suffering from malnutrition.⁴²

The most critical resource constraint Slim had to face was the amount of transport aircraft allocated to his forces. He discovered by early '43 that airpower, especially the ability to move troops and supplies by air, was one of the keys to victory. The Americans provided most of the transport aircraft to the

theater, but they insisted that the lion's share be devoted to supplying the Chinese. This restriction would cause Slim many anxious moments in the next two years, and would cause his forces to continually operate on the edge between victory and defeat.

This resource constrained situation remained throughout Slim's entire Burma campaign. His soldiers picked up this state of affairs and dubbed themselves the "forgotten army":

and there was some justification for their point of view. To people in Britain, India was far off and the events of Europe had an apparently greater significance than an action on the Assam frontier, or news of Gandhi's latest fast. The American attitude was no less compromising: they were convinced that the British in India had no intention of fighting the Japanese until America had won the war in the Pacific. Short of equipment, (a force) depressed by a series of defeats, Slim described his army as a 'Cinderella' of all British armies which 'would get only what her *richer* sisters in Africa and Europe could spare'.⁴³

It is a mark of Slim's leadership and his soldiers devotion to duty that by 1945 this nickname was a badge of honor to the men in the 14th Army.

Slim surely did not enjoy unity of command. Rather, the leadership situation in Burma was, at best, convoluted. While Slim was a truly strong personality in his own right, he was just one of many in this theater. The cast of characters looked like something out of central casting: the acerbic anglophobe U.S. General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell; the messianic Major General Orde Wingate; the ever-so-proper Viceroy of India, Field Marshal Wavell; the consummate professional, General Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army; the solid and stolid old professional, General Sir George Giffard, Slim's immediate superior; the pompous egocentrics, Lieutenant Generals Oliver

Leese and Noel Irwin; and the dynamic yet overbearing Lord Louis Mountbatten, a 45-year-old naval officer who was Supreme Commander, SouthEast Asia Command. Most of these characters will be discussed in this paper because each had a profound effect on how the war was fought in Burma. So a composite picture is necessary to understand this situation.

By mid 1943, the initial, often chaotic, leadership situation had settled down. As a result of the Quebec Conference held in August of that year, the U.S. and Britain decided to streamline the chain of command between the American China-Burma-India forces under Stilwell and the British forces under Auchinleck in India. They wanted to reduce the huge responsibilities of the Indian army to train and supply the forces in the field, and control the fight. Accordingly, Auchinleck was given the train-supply mission, and Lord Mountbatten was brought in to command the newly designated SouthEast Asia Command (SEAC).⁴⁴ Under Mountbatten were General Sir George Giffard, commanding 11th Army Group, which consisted of all land forces in theater; Stilwell in three roles--deputy commander of SEAC, Chief of Staff to the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek, and commander of all American forces in theater; and Slim in command of the British 14th Army. However, the situation in SEAC was rarely tranquil.

Mountbatten assumed command of SEAC "convinced that fresh blood and a new approach were very necessary in a theater where a dispirited British Army looked inwards towards areas disturbed by Indian Nationalists and outwards on savage little yellow men, who seemed to have proved themselves invincible."⁴⁵ He was renowned for his drive and dynamism, but he was extremely vain and could be a bit of a 'loose cannon' when it came to implementing his ideas. In

fact, General Sir Henry Pownall, Mountbatten's Chief of Staff, had been encouraged by the British Chief of Staff, General Sir Alanbrooke, to see himself as a benevolent uncle, curbing the headstrong excesses of a nephew who had prematurely succeeded as head of the family.⁴⁶ This was a task that Pownall, by his own admission, often had a difficult time accomplishing. Frequently, he had to tell Mountbatten that "he had gone completely off the rails and he had no right to go about things the way he had done."⁴⁷ Yet for all his faults, Mountbatten brought an energy that was sorely lacking to this theater of war.

No sooner had Mountbatten assumed command than other problems started to arise, all involving strong personalities. First was the aftermath of the 'Quit India' campaign conducted by the Indian Congress Party under Gandhi. This initially nonviolent protest against both British rule of India and India's participation in the war turned into an organized rebellion; it was not crushed before Britain had committed the larger part of the Indian Army to suppress it. Even by mid '43, SEAC's lines of communication were still feeling the results of this uprising: sabotage, work stoppages, and riots.⁴⁸

Then there was General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. As stated, Stilwell was a man wearing many hats. One was unofficial; he hated the British. Stilwell's personal diaries are full of vituperative comments about the 'Limeys'. He, like many other senior U.S. generals, saw the British as unwilling to fight the Japanese with anything near the vigor with which the Americans were conducting their campaign. Although Stilwell's initial impression of Mountbatten was positive, he soon lumped him in with all the other "Limeys", and constantly fought Mountbatten about the direction of the war, and the force structure to fight it. One of Stilwell's diary entries reveals their strained relationship: "The (SEAC

headquarters) set-up is a Chinese puzzle with Wavell, Auk [Auchinleck], Mountbatten, Peanut [one of his names of Chiang Kai-shek], Alexander and me interwoven and mixed." Barker recalls that Stilwell was suspicious of Mountbatten from the start.

To begin with he was charmed by the Supremo's [Mountbatten's] personality: 'This fellow seems all right,' he said to General Wedemeyer, Mountbatten's new American Chief of Staff, 'but, you watch him, Wedemeyer; keep your eye on him.' Mountbatten was also watching Stilwell: he felt the unsatisfactory and uneasy relationship that existed between him and his deputy.⁴⁹

Next was General Sir George Giffard, commander of all Allied land forces in SEAC (11th Army Group). Giffard was the senior general in the British Army and was seen by many, especially the Americans, as timid and inept. While he was neither, he was slow and prudent. Well aware of Mountbatten's drive and energy, he saw his job as one of softening the impact of an inexperienced naval officer.⁵⁰ Mountbatten's difficulties with Giffard were not limited to his stolid nature. Stilwell had no use for Giffard, seeing in him the same timidity as Mountbatten had noted. Consequently, he refused to place his Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) under Giffard's 11th Army Group. A unique solution was found when Stilwell agreed to place his forces under Slim, Giffard's subordinate.⁵¹ However, Mountbatten and Giffard's relationship never did improve. So Mountbatten eventually relieved Giffard in May 1943 for his slow response in moving reserves during the battles of Imphal/Kohima.⁵² Giffard's replacement proved even more difficult.

The final player in this drama was by far the most unique. Major General Orde Wingate was an enigma. In Slim's words "he was a strange, excitable,

moody creature, but he had fire in him."⁵³ He began the Second World War as an obscure colonel. Yet, like T.E. Lawrence, Wingate became convinced after operations with Ethiopian partisans in 1941 that unconventional warfare was the key to victory.⁵⁴ Through an almost unbelievable zeal and self-confidence, he ended up having a major impact on the campaign in Burma. Wingate's premise was simple: a properly trained and equipped force could be inserted deep into the enemy's rear to disrupt his lines of communications and supply. If such operations were carried out with vigor and audacity, they would not only seriously affect the enemy's capability to fight, but would be the key to victory as well.

Wingate conducted his first raid deep behind the Japanese lines in April-May 1942. Although he lost over 1000 of his 3000 men and did little real damage to the Japanese, his efforts were declared a great success. In fact, he was hailed by many, including Churchill, as the 'Clive of Burma'. In the final analysis, the claims of victory were not so far off, because Wingate's raid truly boosted British morale. For over 18 months of combat against the Japanese in Burma, the British had suffered defeat after defeat, to include two humiliating retreats. As a result, they began to see the Japanese as supermen and natural jungle fighters. Wingate's first Chindit expedition raised spirits and restored energetic confidence in the British forces by proving they were the equal to and, in many respects, superior to the Japanese in jungle fighting. Fortified by his success, Wingate pushed for an even larger role for his Chindits. And he got the ear of Churchill. As a result of the Quebec Conference (August 1943), Wingate was given a force five times larger than his original one, then assigned the mission of disrupting Japanese communications and logistics over most of north and central Burma. Wingate himself became consumed with the importance of his mission,

so much so that he was convinced his forces constituted the Allies' main effort against the Japanese, with all other conventional forces merely supporting his efforts. His second Chindit campaign, dubbed Operation THURSDAY, committing almost 20,000 troops, began on 5 March 1944. However, Wingate never lived to see if his unconventional effort would be successful; he died in a plane crash on 25 March 1944. Although the second Chindit raid was instrumental in disrupting the Japanese lines of communication, the operation lost much of its intended focus with Wingate's death. As Slim said: "without [Wingate's] presence to animate it, Special Force would no longer be the same to others or to itself. He had created, inspired, defended it and given it confidence; it was the offspring of his vivid imagination and ruthless energy. It had no other parent. Now it was orphaned."⁵⁵ His concepts invoked strong passion on both sides, for and against, but there can be no doubt he had a significant effect on the Burma campaign. Perhaps Churchill summed him up best: 'a man of genius who might well have become also a man of destiny'.⁵⁶

Slim dealt with each of these personalities differently--and imaginatively. However, each relationship was characterized by Slim's professionalism, integrity and humanity.

While Slim's relationship with Mountbatten was that of subordinate to senior, from their first meeting they formed a bond that would last the rest of their lives. Their own words best tell the story. Mountbatten offers an interesting description of his first meeting with Slim:

I had taken an immediate liking to Slim and offered him the Command of the new Army we were going to create for the Burma Campaign under a new name (soon to become the 14th Army). Slim was obviously delighted but said 'Won't you have to ask General Giffard first?' I said 'No' as I was the Supreme Commander and Giffard was my subordinate.... Anyway once Slim had accepted

we got down to discussing details. He agreed at once to issue orders that there would be no more retreat and that I had undertaken to supply cut off forces by air.⁵⁷

"Slim, ten years older than Mountbatten, sagacious, unhurried, skeptical, took up his command with confidence because he too had suddenly found a man he could trust."⁵⁸

Slim's first impressions of Mountbatten are equally cheerful:

Youthful, buoyant, picturesque, with a reputation for gallantry known everywhere, he talked to the British soldier with irresistible frankness and charm. To the Indian he appealed equally. The morale of the army was already on the upgrade; he was the final tonic....We began to feel that we belonged to an efficient show, or what was going to be one, and that feeling spread.⁵⁹

Despite their ten year age difference, Slim's humility and lack of an overbearing ego allowed him to see in Mountbatten not only a first class leader and superior, but also someone who was as committed to victory and the welfare of soldiers as he himself was. This genuine, mutual admiration would see them through many trying times, providing the spark for many unique ideas, such as continuing the fight through the monsoon, that proved crucial to victory.⁶⁰ Their relationship can best be summed up by Mountbatten's words to Slim as Slim lay on his death bed: "We did it together, old boy."⁶¹

Slim's relationship with Stilwell was singular, especially from Stilwell's point of view. Slim was the only British leader Stilwell liked. They first met during the dark days of the '42 Burma retreat. That experience would form the basis of their mutual admiration for the rest of the war. Stilwell's journal entry of 29 March 1942 reveals that Slim had promised to make an attack against the Japanese force that was about to overrun Stilwell's Chinese force during the '42 retreat: "Good old Slim. Maybe he's all right after all."⁶² Slim's description of Stilwell gives a clear insight into his impression of this irascible figure, as well as his keen insight into human nature:

These were my first active contacts with Stilwell, who had arrived in Burma a few days after me. He already had something of a reputation for shortness of temper and for distrust of most of the rest of the world. I must admit he surprised me a little when, at our first meeting, he said, 'Well, General, I must tell you that my motto in all dealings is "buyer beware",' but he never, as far as I was concerned, lived up to that old horse-trader's motto. He was over sixty, but he was tough, mentally and physically; he could be as obstinate as a whole team of mules; he could be, and frequently was, downright rude to people whom, often for no very good reason, he did not like. But when he said he would do a thing he did it. True, you had to get him to say that he would, quite clearly and definitely—and that was not always easy—but once he had, you knew he would keep to his word. He had a habit, which I found very disarming, of arguing most tenaciously against some proposal and then suddenly looking at you over the top of his glasses with the shadow of a grin, and saying, 'Now tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it.' He was two people, one when he had an audience, and a quite different person when talking to you alone. I think it amused him to keep up in public the 'Vinegar Joe, Tough Guy' attitude, especially in front of his staff. Americans, whether they liked him or not—and he had more enemies among Americans than among British—were all scared of him. He had courage to an extent few people have, and determination, which, as he usually concentrated it along narrow lines, had a dynamic force. He was not a great soldier in the highest sense, but he was a real leader in the field; no one else I know could have made his Chinese do what they did. He was, undoubtedly, the most colorful character in South-East Asia—and I liked him.⁶³

Slim's association with General Giffard was based on the mutual respect and trust of professional soldiers, and the natural trust and affection of friends.

Slim describes their partnership:

The new Army Commander had a great effect on me. A tall, good-looking man in the late fifties, who had obviously kept himself physically and mentally in first-class condition, there was nothing dramatic about him in either appearance or speech. He abhorred the theatrical, and was one of the very few generals, indeed men in any position, I have known who *really* disliked publicity. The first impression he gave was of courtesy and consideration, and this was a lasting impression because it was based on thought for others. But there was much more to General Giffard than good taste, good manners, and unselfishness. He understood the fundamentals of war—that soldiers must be trained before they can

fight, fed before they can march, and relieved before they are worn out. He understood that front-line commanders should be spared responsibilities in rear, and that soundness of organization and administration is worth more than specious short-cuts to victory. Having chosen his subordinates and given them their tasks, he knew how to leave them without interference, but with the knowledge that, if they needed it, his support was behind them. I returned to Calcutta—with some difficulty, as the weather forced back my aircraft twice—feeling that the new Army Commander was a man I could work with, and for, wholeheartedly. ⁶⁴

Despite their close relationship, Slim was professional enough to recognize that by May '43 Giffard was no longer effective because of his repeated clashes with Mountbatten. Reluctantly, he concurred with Giffard's dismissal from command. But, to the end of his life, he consistently credited Giffard with being the one of the key senior leaders in the victory in Burma.

Slim's association with the last of the key personalities was characterized by a like-dislike-tolerate cycle the entire time they were together. To describe Orde Wingate in anything less than a book would be impossible. His tactical concept of long range penetration was controversial and he could inspire almost messianic passion in his subordinates that made dealing with them a chore. Slim and Wingate had many dealings throughout the Burma campaign. By February '43, Wingate's forces were placed under Slim's 14th Army, with the mission of supporting Stilwell's Chinese NCAC as they advanced south in March '43. The scope of 'Operation THURSDAY' was huge, and Slim disagreed with the devotion of so many scarce resources to what he considered a side show. He and Wingate butted heads over this operation several times. However, Wingate's untimely death left most of their disagreements unresolved. Slim's comments on Wingate reveal a fascinating and complex relationship:

On the whole, Wingate and I agreed better than most people expected....Of course we differed on many things. It was

impossible not to differ from a man who so fanatically pursued his own purposes without regard to any other consideration or person....I was at Comilla when the signal came in that Wingate was missing. As the hours passed and no news of any sort arrived, gloom descended upon us. We could ill spare him at the start of his greatest attempt (Opn Thursday). The immediate sense of loss that struck, like a blow, even those who had differed most from him—and I was not one of these—was a measure of the impact he had made. He had stirred up everyone with whom he had come in contact. With him, contact had too often been collision, for few could meet so stark a character without being either violently attracted or repelled. To most he was either prophet or adventurer. Very few could regard him dispassionately; nor did he care to be so regarded. I once likened him to Peter the Hermit preaching his Crusade. I am sure that many of the knights and princes that Peter so fiercely exhorted did not like him very much—but they went crusading all the same. The trouble was, I think, that Wingate regarded *himself* as a prophet, and that always leads to a single-centredness that verges on fanaticism, with all its faults. Yet had he not done so, his leadership could not have been so dynamic, nor his personal magnetism so striking.⁶⁵

On the whole, Slim thought Wingate's concepts and ideas were a diversion of precious resources. In a letter to General Woodburn Kirby, author of Britain's Official History of the War Against Japan, Slim bluntly states, "Soberly considered, I do not believe that the contribution of Special Force was either great in effect, or commensurate with the resources it absorbed. It was, I consider, surpassed by that of many of the normal divisions. Nor do I think, judging by what happened when the Japanese, even with inferior forces, made serious efforts against it, that Wingate's ambitious visions of his columns as the main force could ever have been translated into reality."⁶⁶ Christopher Sykes, Wingate's biographer, contends that Slim's observations on Wingate amount to self-serving revisionist history, that Wingate and his Chindits were a major contributor to the British victory in Burma, and that Slim does not give adequate credit to Wingate's ideas or operations. Regardless of the truth, both men were dynamic personalities who played a great part in the reconquest of Burma.

The Burma theater in which Slim operated fully satisfies the definition of a strategic environment. Ambiguity prevailed with the Allies--Britain and America--fighting the same campaign for very different reasons. Slim indeed had limited resources. In fact the paucity of resources made it the 'forgotten theater' most of the war. The chief competing interest in the theater was the Americans desire to keep China in the war and the British goal of retrieving their empire. Further, the theater was interdependent on other environments, especially on the Indian Army's ability to supply and train a force for SEAC, and on the Allies for strategic direction and guidance. Finally, the personalities of the various key leaders contributed to the ambiguity and interdependence throughout the campaign. That Slim was able to navigate the often treacherous waters is a tribute to his leadership and his great personal traits. The scope of his achievements must be acknowledged in the context of this challenging strategic environment.

STRATEGIC LEADER TASKS. Currently, strategy is defined as the sum of ends, ways, and means. That is, strategy equals sum of the military objectives, military strategic concepts, and military resources.⁶⁷ By extension then, the strategic leader's principal task is to successfully blend ends, ways and means to accomplish the stated strategy. This strategy may be achieved by developing a vision and a plan to achieve the vision, setting priorities, establishing values and setting the tone for the organization. Two episodes in Slim's Burma campaign reveal his accomplishments as a strategic leader. First, let us consider his after-action review of the '42 retreat, which laid the groundwork for his victories in the battles of the Second Arakan, Imphal and Kohima.

The '42 retreat was a military disaster. Out of an original force of approximately 40,000 men, over 20,000 were lost. "Additionally the army brought

out very little in the way of equipment or transport. It reported to General Headquarters India that it had ten twenty-five pounder guns, four anti-tank guns, fourteen 3.7 inch mountain guns with little or no ammunition, no tanks, about fifty lorries, and thirty jeeps."⁶⁸ In May '42, Slim decided to analyze what had gone wrong. In his words, he sought to determine why the British "had been outmaneuvered, outfought and outgeneralled."⁶⁹ He came to the following conclusions:

- Lack of intelligence about Japanese plans, intentions or tactics. The Japanese were constantly able to infiltrate the British lines, then interrupt their lines of communications with roadblocks. British understanding of these tactics did not improve at all during the retreat.
- Lack of preparation. The British forces in Burma were woefully trained and equipped to fight in the jungle.
- Completely inadequate air forces.
- Total breakdown of civilian government. This caused great resentment among the local populace against the British and Indians, and led to much banditry.
- Poor generalship. The British had no clear military objectives, deployed troops poorly, and used improper tactics for the jungle.
- Very poor morale. This was the price of defeat.⁷⁰

Based on these conclusions, Slim set out to build a fighting force that could defeat the Japanese and reconquer Burma. He concentrated on two areas: training and morale. His efforts to improve morale will be reviewed during the assessment of his generalship.

To improve training, he developed a comprehensive plan based on these tenants:

o The individual soldier must learn, by living, moving, and exercising in it, that the jungle is neither impenetrable nor unfriendly. When he has once learned to move and live in it, he can use it for concealment, covered movement, and surprise.

o Patrolling is the master key to jungle fighting. All units, not only infantry battalions, must learn to patrol in the jungle, boldly, widely, cunningly, and offensively.

o In defence, no attempt should be made to hold long continuous lines. Avenues of approach must be covered and enemy penetration between our posts must be dealt with at once by mobile local reserves who have completely reconnoitered the country.

o There should rarely be frontal attacks and never frontal attacks on narrow fronts. Attacking should follow hooks and come in from flank or rear, while pressure holds the enemy in front.

o Tanks can be used in almost any country except swamp. In close country they must always have infantry with them to defend and reconnoitre for them. They should always be used in the maximum numbers available and capable of being deployed. Whenever possible penny packets must be avoided. "The more you use, the fewer you lose."

o There are no non-combatants in jungle warfare. Every unit and sub unit, including medical, is responsible for its own all-round protection, including patrolling, at all times.

o If the Japanese are allowed to hold the initiative, they are formidable. When we have it, they are confused and easy to kill. By mobility away from roads, surprise, and offensive action we must regain and keep the initiative.⁷¹

Based on these training principles, Slim envisioned a new method of dealing with Japanese infiltration and encirclement tactics. In a country that was vast and required long lines of communications, Slim planned to establish strong, well stocked pivots of maneuver covering areas which the enemy would be forced to attack to open up a line of communication for his advance. Mobile forces stationed at these strong points would operate, not to hold or regain

ground, but to destroy the Japanese force. Slim made it crystal clear to his subordinate leaders that in the event one of these strong points was surrounded and its lines of communication cut by the Japanese, the strong points and forward units were to stand fast where they would be supplied by air. The strong points would then become the anvil against which mobile reserves would destroy the Japanese forces.⁷²

The key to this concept was the use of air not only for resupply, but also as a airborne artillery. Moreover, air transport provided a method of rapidly moving units to reinforce surrounded strong points. Slim was one of the first generals in the eastern theater to recognize the role of air, having seen how the lack of it played such a critical part in the defeat of '42. He called it "airmindedness": "We approached the problem from the starting point that transportation by air was no more extraordinary than movement by road, rail, or boat; it was merely one method of moving things and men."⁷³ To maintain access to airpower, Slim established close and harmonious relations with the air components in theater, both with the U.S. Army Air Force (who supplied the bulk of the transport aircraft and medium bombers) and the Royal Air Force (who supplied the bulk of fighters and ground attack aircraft). This relationship worked so well that Air Marshal Vincent, the RAF commander, co-located his headquarters with Slim's, thereby ensuring that air liaison elements were at all headquarters down to brigade/battalion level. This team concept was so successful that many of our modern procedures of air support and resupply have emerged from this air-land marriage.

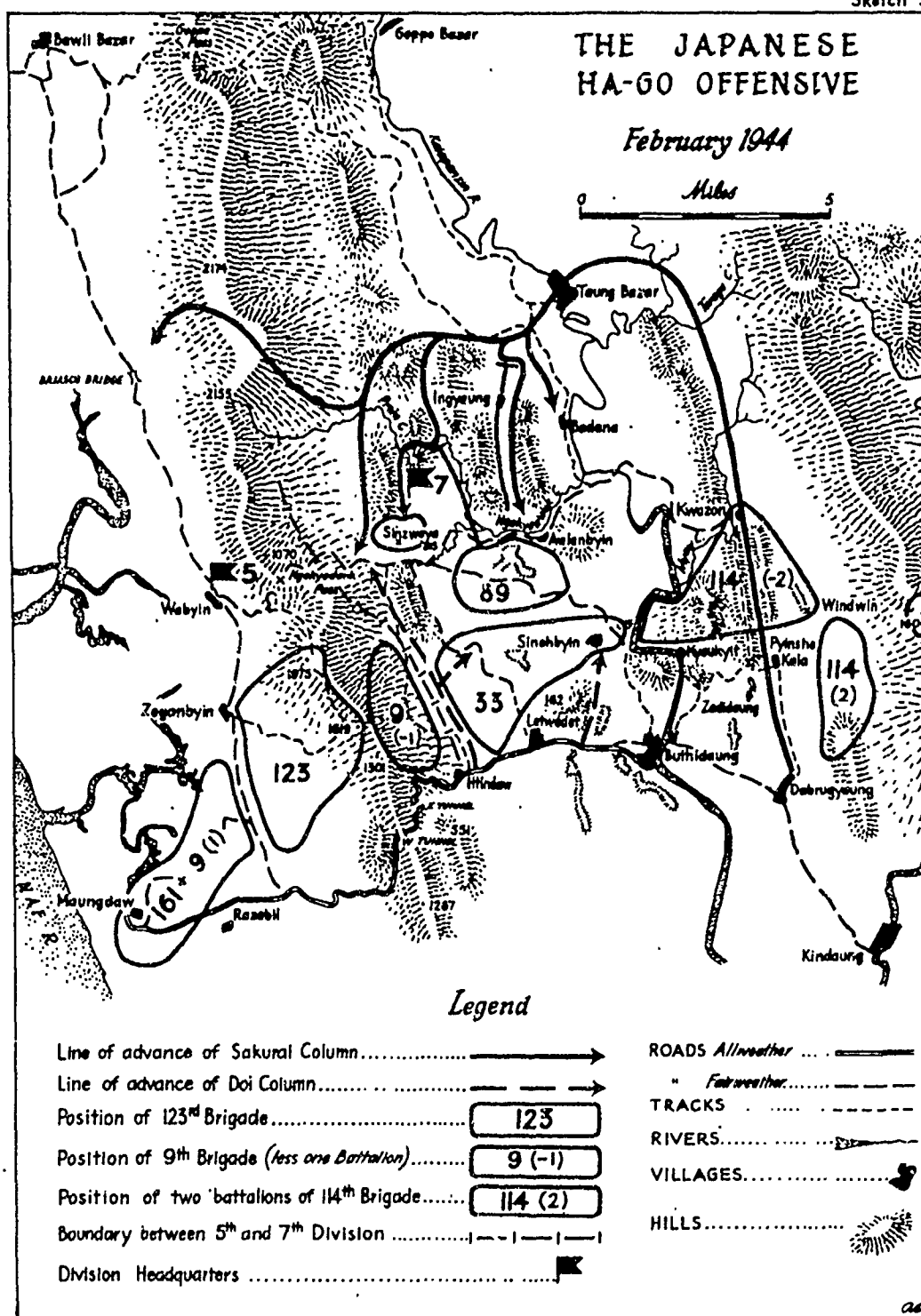
Slim's final strategic principle was the overwhelming use of force. He was convinced that once the initiative had been wrestled from the Japanese, and

they realized that their infiltration tactics were not working, they would then be very vulnerable. He planned to take full advantage of this vulnerability by "using a steam hammer to crack a walnut."⁷⁴ He followed through: "We attacked Japanese company positions with brigades fully supported by artillery and aircraft, platoon posts with battalions."⁷⁵

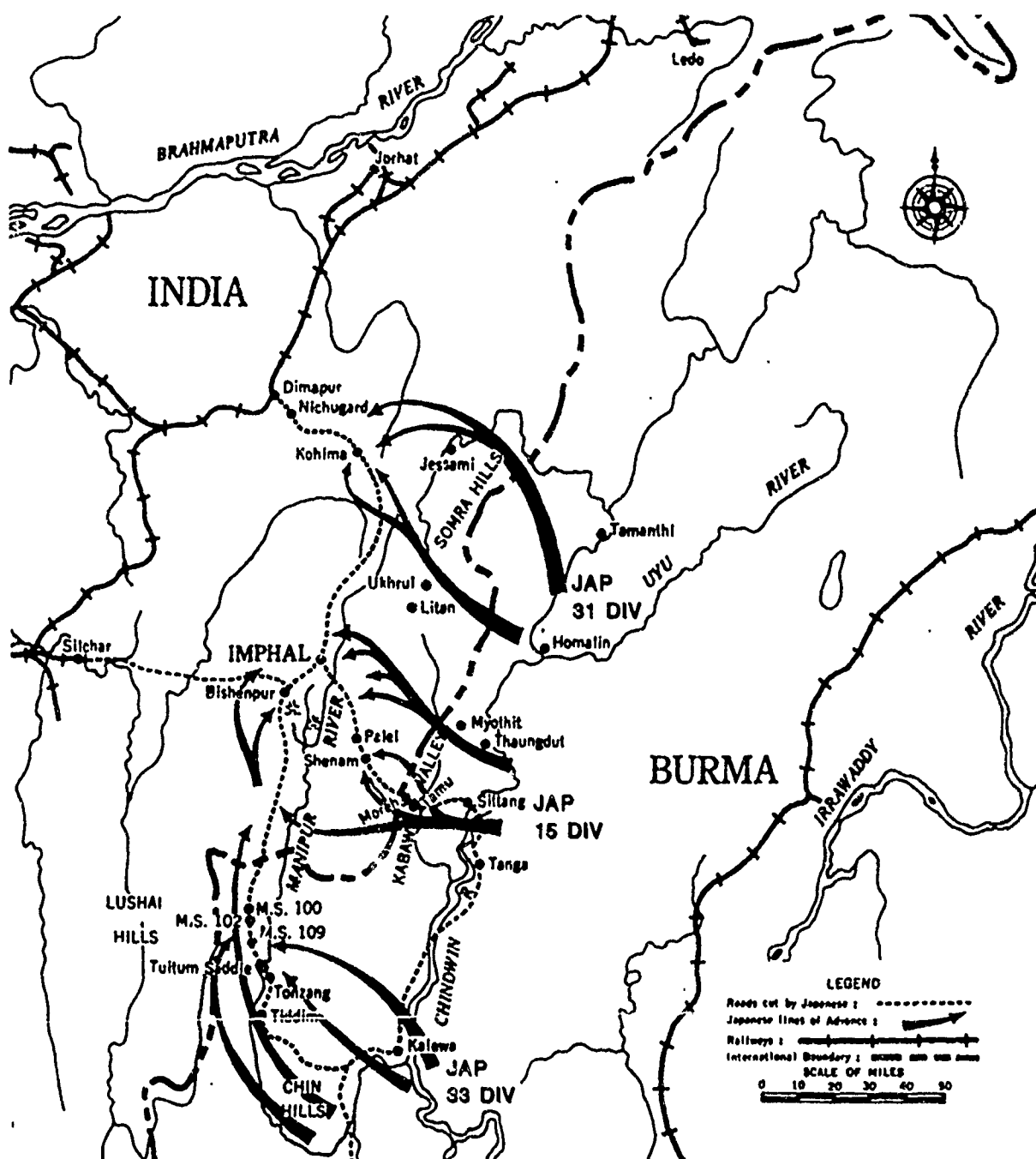
When it came time to implement this new strategy, Slim, like all great generals, enjoyed a share of luck. Just as his 14th Army concluded an extensive training program in the new tactics and put it into practice by crushing several small enemy outpost with overwhelming power, the Japanese tried to invade India.

They had two objectives: First, they wanted to cut the new Ledo Road being built in northern Burma to reconnect the land route to China. Second, noting the unrest caused by the 'Quit India' campaign, they felt they could destroy British hegemony in India.⁷⁶ Their plan (See Maps 3 and 4) called for a diversionary strike in Arakan to pull in British reserves to the south. Then they would attack India through the Imphal Plain by capturing Imphal and the major supply base at Kohima. The Japanese plan almost succeeded. They struck first in Arakan with one reinforced division on 4 February 1944. Over the next four months, they succeeded in drawing four British divisions into the fight. However, Slim's new strategy worked: bypassed units dug in defensively and were resupplied by air; reserves were flown in; then, overwhelming power was used to crush the Japanese.

The results at Kohima and Imphal, where the Japanese attacked on 10 March 1944, were the same--but not before some very anxious moments for the British. Slim made two big mistakes. First, he anticipated this attack and



MAP 3: Japanese Invasion of Arakan



MAP 4

pegged its start date for 15 March. His plan was to pull his divisions into strong points around Imphal before that date. Because the Japanese attacked a week early, these divisions had to fight their way back to their strong points. Second, he thought the Japanese would attack Kohima with no more than a regiment; he allocated and deployed forces there accordingly. Instead the Japanese attacked with a whole division. Thus both Kohima and Imphal were surrounded. In Slim's own words, "it was an error that was likely to cost us dear."⁷⁷ However, Slim kept his cool, adhered to his concept, especially the use of air for resupply and the movement of troops (in this case, two entire divisions), and finally won the battle. Over the next four months, his soldiers engaged in one of the toughest fights of World War II, a fight that rivaled the meat grinders of World War I or the battle of Stalingrad in intensity, savagery and number of casualties.

The scope of his victory at the battles of the Second Arakan, Imphal and Kohima were staggering. By conservative estimates, the Japanese lost 65,000 of the 100,000 men who had invaded India, and most of those escaping were disease ridden and starving. One brief account shows the magnitude of their defeat: "In the end we had no ammunition, no clothes, no food, no guns...the men were barefoot and ragged, and threw away everything except canes to help them walk. Their eyes blazed in their lean bodies...all they had to keep them going was grass and water....Thousands of sick and wounded fell out of the march and killed themselves with grenades."⁷⁸

Slim's victory vindicated his generalship. He had systematically learned from his mistakes and developed a new and effective strategy to defeat his enemy. Then he had the fortitude to see it through to fruition, despite early misestimates and setbacks. In his genuinely humble manner, he gave credit

where credit was due: "I was like other generals before me...saved from the consequences of my mistakes by the resourcefulness of my subordinate commanders and the stubborn valor of my troops."⁷⁹ As enormous as these victories had been, they were only the stepping stone to his capture of Mandalay and Meiktila--the second example of his maturity as a strategic leader.

After his tremendous victories at Imphal and Kohima, Slim confirmed his greatness by following two maxims of war: Clausewitz declared that "as a principle that if you can vanquish all your enemies by defeating one of them, that defeat must be the main objective in the war. In this one enemy we strike at the center of gravity of the entire conflict."⁸⁰ Likewise, Sun Tzu's advises that "having paid heed to the advantages of (his) plans, the general must create situations which will contribute to their accomplishment. By situations...he should act expediently in accordance with what is advantageous and so control the balance."⁸¹ The way Slim accomplished these two maxims was through a plan called 'Operation CAPITAL' (See Map 5).

Operation CAPITAL had its genesis on 9 June 1944, when Mountbatten ordered his SEAC staff to begin preliminary plans to reconquer Burma.⁸² The plan called for:

- (i) An advance across the Chindwin by Fourteenth Army, supported by 221 Group R.A.F., to occupy the area between that river and the Irrawaddy. Success to be exploited to include the capture of Mandalay.
- (ii) A complementary advance by N.C.A.C. and the Chinese Yunnan Force, supported by the 10th and 14th U.S.A.A.F., to the line Thabeikkyin-Mogok-Lashio.
- (iii) A limited advance in Arakan by 15 Corps, supported by 224 Group R.A.F., to secure (Br) forward positions and to prevent interference with (Br) airfields.
- (iv) As these operations progressed, a sea and airborne assault (code name 'DRACULA') to seize Rangoon some time before the 1945 monsoon, i.e. about March 1945.⁸³

[illegible]

Capital (black).
Extended Capital (Red).
Railway.
Roads all weather.
Fair weather.
Trees



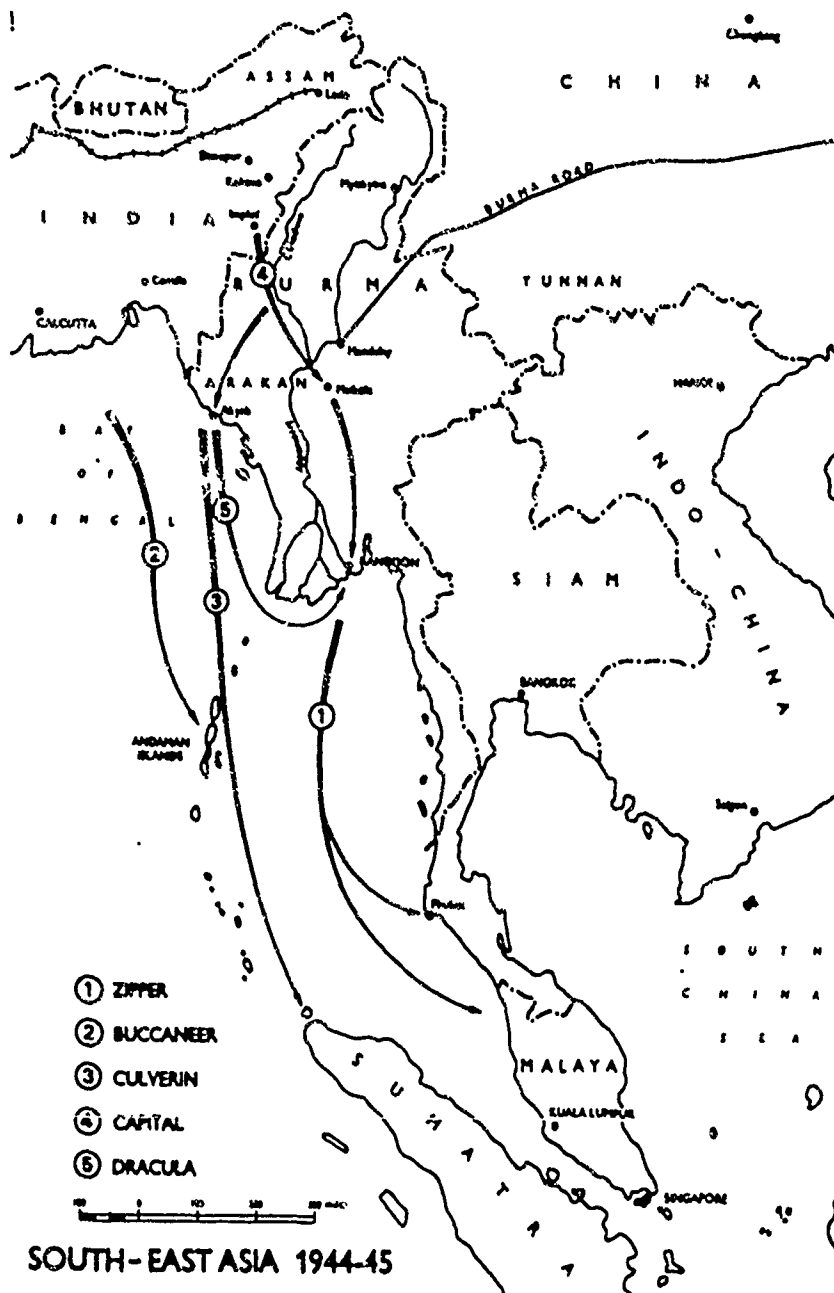
MAP 5

These had not been the first plans Mountbatten had proposed to the British and American Combined Chiefs of Staff. In fact, he had submitted a stream of plans, starting in November 1943 (See Map 6): Operation ZIPPER, the invasion of Malaya; Operation BUCCANEER, the invasion of the Andaman Islands; Operation CULVERN, the invasion of Sumatra. In each of these cases, SEAC's position as low man on the totem pole was evident, since the Chiefs never had the amphibious resources to allocate to SEAC to conduct these operations. CAPITAL and DRACULA were chosen mostly because they could be supported with the resources on hand.

Mountbatten sought to press the Japanese relentlessly, even through the monsoon. Immediately after Imphal/Kohima, Giffard authorized Slim to pursue the Japanese and seize crossings over the Chindwin river and the town of Kalewa, operations Slim was only too ready to carry out with all the resources at his disposal.⁸⁴ The nature of this pursuit is recorded in one of the British brigade's diary: "Hill tracks are...either so slippery that men can hardly walk or knee-deep in mud....Half a company took ten hours to carry two stretcher-cases four miles. A party of men without packs took seven hours to cover five miles. Nonetheless, the pursuit went on through the monsoon."⁸⁵ This pursuit set the stage for the execution of Operation CAPITAL by seizing crossings on one of Burma's great rivers, the Chindwin, and giving the British access to the great Shwebo Plain, north of Mandalay.

Slim's plan to execute Operation CAPITAL was simple. First, he made an analysis of requirements necessary to successfully accomplish this mission:

- (i) The necessary divisions, replenished, trained, equipped, and placed ready to move.
- (ii) A vastly improved system of communications to the Chindwin, an adequate land and air transport organization, and enough supplies collected well forward.
- (iii) Bridgeheads, firmly held, across the Chindwin.⁸⁶



MAP 6: PROPOSED SEAC OPERATIONS

He anticipated that the Japanese would make their main stand by defending Mandalay on the Shwebo Plain, north of Mandalay. Slim's appreciation that Lieutenant General Kimura, the Burma Area Army Commander, would fight a major action at Shwebo was based on the intelligence assessments of Lieutenant General Kawabe,⁸⁷ Kimura's predecessor, which were colored by a degree of wishful thinking. The Shwebo Plain would have been an ideal killing ground for the powerful Allied air forces and the vastly superior British-Indian armored forces.⁸⁸

Accordingly, Slim called off the pursuit of the Japanese once the Chindwin crossings had been taken because of the poor health of his troops, most of whom had been fighting for the better part of a year under appalling circumstances. Disease had taken its toll, they were tired and needed a rest.⁸⁹ Next, he made a detailed study of the Japanese, their forces available, logistical conditions and intentions. He still believed they would defend north of Mandalay and could field five and one third divisions against 14th Army. Then, Slim undertook a comprehensive administrative study of the region in which he would be fighting to determine what size force could be supported. He concluded that even though he had over six divisions and two armor brigades, the lines of communication could provide approximately 75,000 tons of supplies a month, which would support only four and two-thirds divisions. After careful study, Slim determined that, given sufficient engineer support (and for Slim engineers 'sufficiency' would equate to miracles in any other theater), this was an adequate force to accomplish the mission, given enough supplies and air support. This study led to a reorganization of his forces. Even though his troops were resting and refitting, he directed that two of the divisions be refitted as motorized and two refitted as mechanized. Each mech division had two mech brigades and one air

transportable brigade. This was a tremendous undertaking, but these divisions carried it out with great skill, in a minimum of time. Finally, Slim divided up his newly trained and refitted forces with 4 Corps, under Lieutenant General Messervy, consisting of the 7th and 19th Indian Divisions, 255 Tank Brigade and the 28th East African Brigade; and 33 Corps, under Lieutenant General Stoppford, consisting of the 2 British, 19th and 20th Indian Divisions, the 254 Tank Brigade and the 268 Brigade.

To accomplish his plan (See Map 5), Slim directed 4 Corps to cross the Chindwin at Sittaung, drive straight east and capture Pinlebu, then turn south and capture Shwebo. 33 Corps was to break out of the Chindwin bridgehead at Kalewa (captured during the pursuit), move southeast and capture Ye-U and Monywa, and then be prepared to help 4 Corps capture Shwebo. Both Corps would then conduct follow-on operations to cross the Irrawaddy River and capture Mandalay. From the beginning of the planning process, Slim and his subordinates devised an unofficial private plan for an advance south to seize Rangoon just as soon as Mandalay was captured. It was known as 'SOB'--Sea or Bust! Slim anticipated success in the main campaign, then he quietly prepared to sustain the operation decisively. This whole planning process clearly illustrates Slim's abilities to develop a strategic vision and a plan to accomplish it.

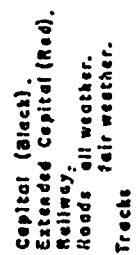
Throughout the preparations for CAPITAL, Slim kept one key principle in the forefront. The victories at Imphal/Kohima had shown him that what he must do was not capture towns, but bring the Japanese Army to battle and destroy it.⁹⁰ His reasoning was simple: it was axiomatic that once he had destroyed the enemy, not only would Mandalay fall, but the whole of Burma must fall.⁹¹ He had clearly seen that this was the Japanese center of gravity.

The operation began on 4 December 1944, when 4 Corps crossed the Chindwin and made for Pinlebu. However, within a few days of the crossing, Slim began to have doubts regarding Japanese intentions to fight north of the Irrawaddy, as he had anticipated. Three indicators pointed toward another course of action by the Japanese: very rapid progress by the 19th Indian Division against little enemy resistance, air reconnaissance showing movement of troops and supplies across the Irrawaddy, and reports from Burmese villagers showing strong indications that the bulk of the Japanese forces had crossed the Irrawaddy and were occupying positions in the east/south loop of the river.⁹²

Based on this information, Slim realized that he would have to change his plan and change it quickly, for the bulk of 14th Army was on the move. He recognized that the situation now called for crossing the Irrawaddy and then bringing Kimura to battle--rather than defeating him first, then crossing the river.⁹³ Slim credits the Japanese for being wise: "wiser than the Germans in similar circumstances on the west of the Rhine. Kimura was showing a greater sense of realities than his predecessor, Kawabe, had at Imphal".⁹⁴ Slim's impromptu response to meet this new situation was to prove the master stroke of strategy of the Burma campaign.⁹⁵

After a quick assessment of the situation, Slim concluded that crowding his four divisions onto the Shwebo Plain, then forcing a river crossing would clearly not achieve his intent of destroying the Japanese forces in central Burma. Quite the opposite, it would give the Japanese the upper hand by allowing them to defend a riverline and contest any attempted crossings. Therefore, with the flexibility of a great commander, Slim revised his plan to carry out a remarkable scissors-switch of his two corps (See Map 7). 4 Corps, leaving behind the 19th

~~CAPITAL and~~

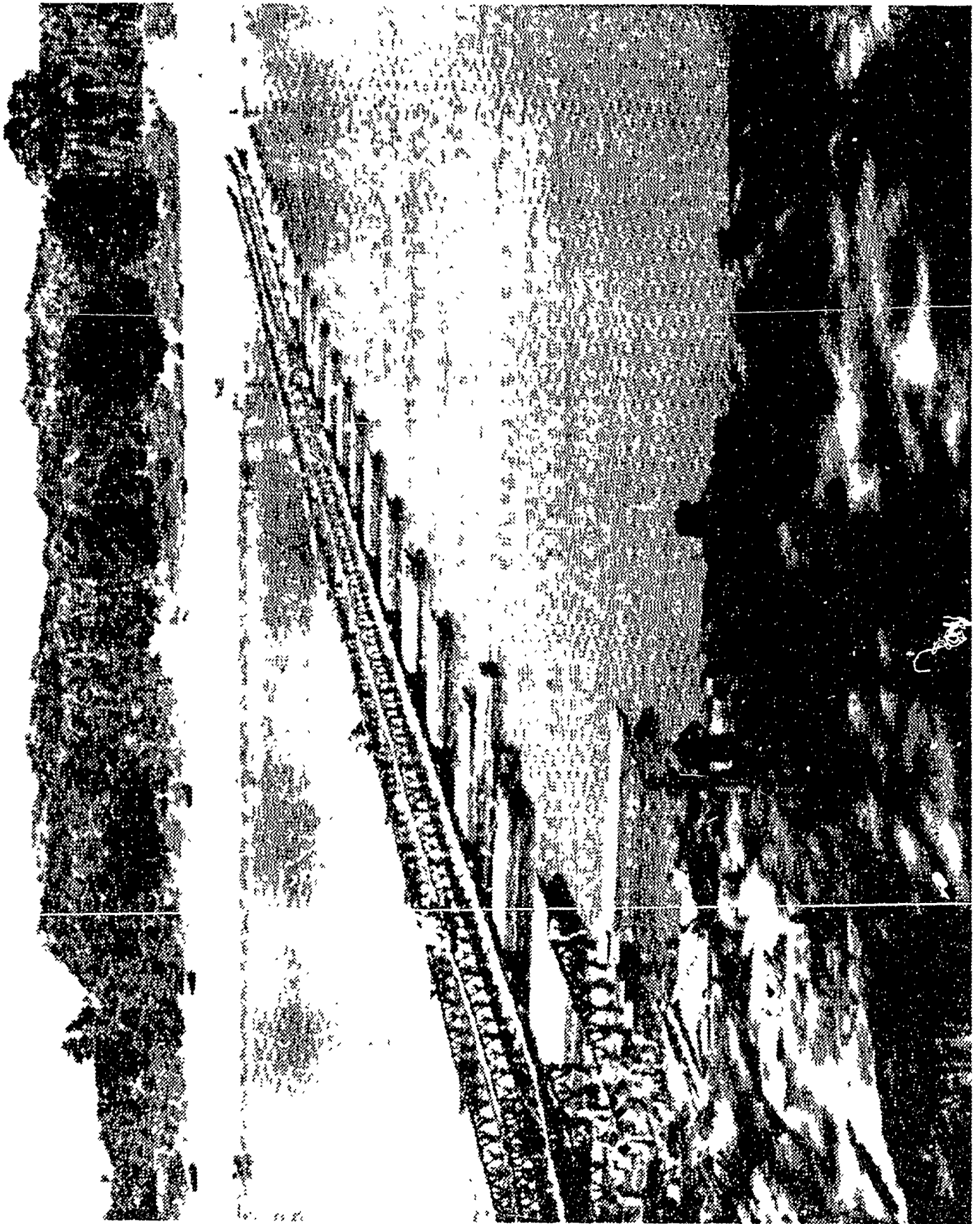


MAP 7

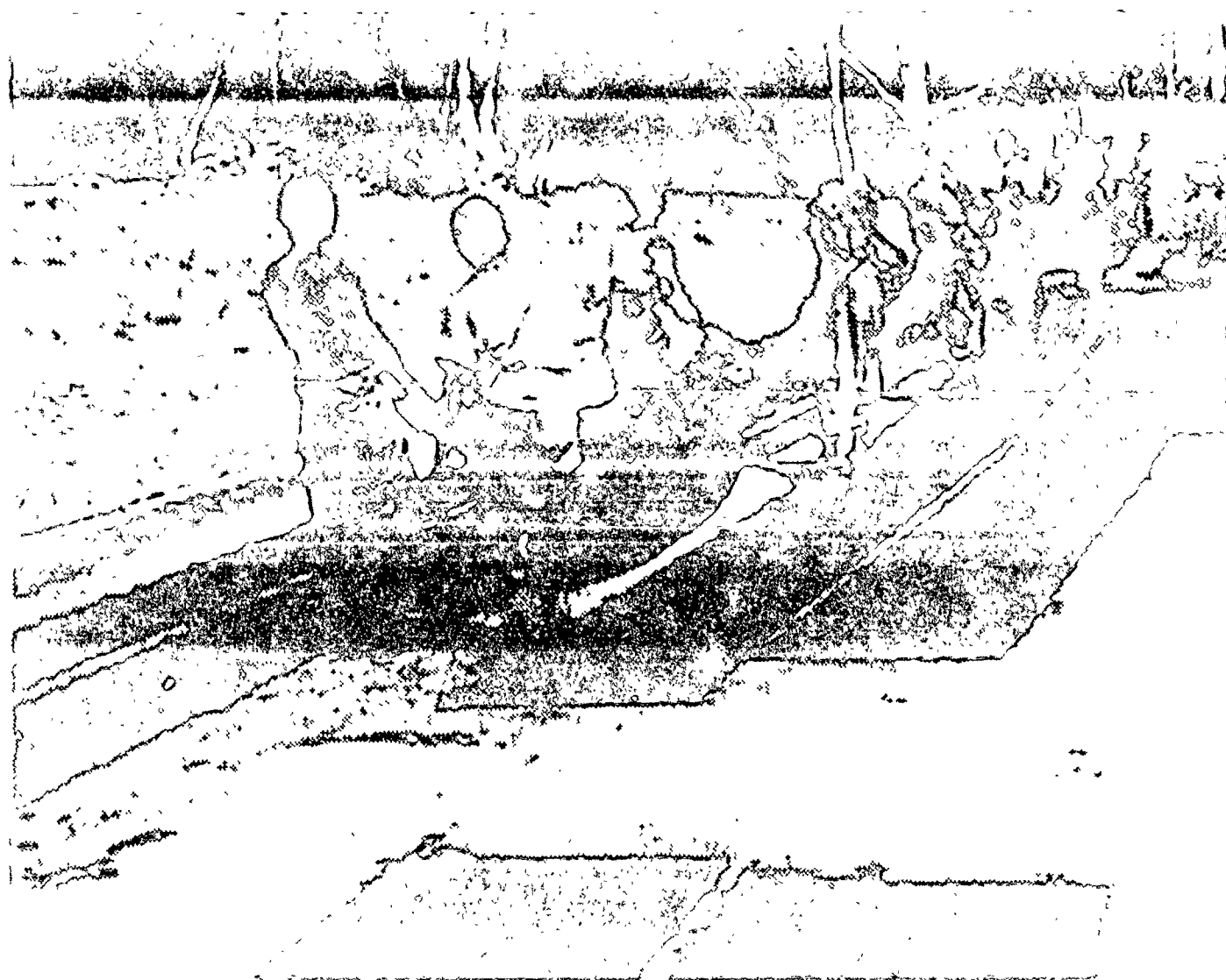
Division and taking with it only the 7th, would pass behind 33 Corps, move up the Gangaw Valley--which climbs south of Kalembo--and debauch on the Irrawaddy roughly about Pagan. 7th Division's task was to cross the river and establish a bridgehead from which 17th Division, which would move from its rest stations in India, would break out and seize Meiktila, the main Japanese communications hub in upper Burma. 33 Corps, reinforced by the 19th Division, would continue its drive on Mandalay from the north, seize bridgeheads on the Irrawaddy, then capture the city. To succeed, his plan first required deception and secrecy. To achieve this, a dummy 4 Corps headquarters would be set up to convince the Japanese that both Corps were still operating north and west of the Irrawaddy with the objective of taking Mandalay. This deception plan (code named Operation CLOAK) called for fake radio traffic between the dummy 4 Corps Headquarters and 14th Army and very strict security measures. Likewise, 4 Corps movement up the Gangaw valley was conducted under radio silence and tight RAF protection to prevent Japanese aerial observance. Second, the plan required precise timing. 33 Corps had to convince Kimura that they constituted the main threat and persuade him to commit his reserves against their crossings of the Irrawaddy. To do this, 19th Division would cross the Irrawaddy well north of Mandalay at Kyaukmyaung, then drive down the east side of the river for the city. This would be followed by crossings at multiple sites by the 2d (at Sagaing) and 20th Divisions (at Myinmu) north and west of the city. These crossings would be followed 24 hours later by the 7th Division's crossing at Pagan. Thus, the Japanese would face two widely different threats, one to Mandalay and one to Meiktila. Thus, they could not concentrate proper forces against either one. Caught between the scissors of 33 Corps in the north and 4 Corps in the south, the Japanese forces in central Burma would be defeated in detail.⁹⁶

The magnitude of this operation, dubbed EXTENDED CAPITAL, is evident both in its operational intricacy, and in its administrative requirements. The lines of communication on which 14th Army would operate were staggering. 33 Corps would be supplied via one fair weather road from the major British-Indian supply base at Dimapur, India, to Kalewa (318 miles), across the Chindwin River on the longest Bailey Bridge of WW II (See Photograph 2), then to Mandalay via Shwebo over one very bad, all-weather road (190 miles). Much of this road was improved by a process called 'bithess'⁹⁷ (See Photograph 3). 4 Corps LOCs was even longer, from Dimapur to Kalewa (318 miles), then to Myingyan via one all weather road and the Chindwin River (200 miles), finally to Meiktila via one all weather road (59 miles). As it moved up the Gangaw Valley, 4 Corps had to build its own road as it went, a distance of over 250 miles.⁹⁸ Slim knew this was a gigantic undertaking for his logisticians and engineers, but he also knew they were up to it. And they were. He also knew that land LOCs would be insufficient. EXTENDED CAPITAL could work only if adequate air transport were available for resupply and troop movement. While the margins were very small, Slim judged that the risks were acceptable.

Realizing time was of the essence, Slim ordered all regroupings for EXTENDED CAPITAL completed by 26 December 1944. Knowing that the monsoons usually began in May, he stipulated that 4 Corps had to be across the Irrawaddy not later than 15 February if his forces were to have any chance of securing Rangoon prior to the rainy season. By 20 January, 33 Corps had closed to the Irrawaddy at three points. And in one of the great engineering and logistics feats of the Second World War, 4 Corps had reached Pagan by 1 February '44, ready to cross the great river.



Photograph 2: Bailey Bridge across the Chindwin River
at Kalewa (Longest Bailey Bridge constructed in WW II)



To negotiate the Gangaw Valley, the Corps hacked airfields every 50 miles out of the jungle for aerial resupply; also they built an all-weather road as they went. This road handled an incredible amount of traffic. Not only did the two mechanized divisions, with much of their equipment on heavy transport trucks, and normal Corps support equipment move on the road, it also handled the huge amount of amphibious equipment necessary for the Irrawaddy crossing. At some points along the route, the terrain restricted the road to one lane; at one point a cantilever portion had to be built around a solid rock hill (See Photograph 4). In order for the Corps to reach its crossing target date, the road was run like a railroad, with ruthless efficiency. Check points along the route were strictly controlled and traffic moved only according to a priority schedule. These efforts enabled the Corps to be on station on time, ready to take Meiktila.

EXTENDED CAPITAL faced a great crisis when 75 American transport aircraft were suddenly withdrawn from 14th Army on 10 December '44. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had responded to a plea from Chiang Kai-shek for aircraft to transport his troops fighting in northern Burma back to China to deal with a renewed Japanese drive aimed at eradicating the American airbases in southern China.⁹⁹ In Slim's words, "the noise of (the U.S. aircraft) engines was the first intimation anyone in Fourteenth Army had of the administrative crisis now bursting upon us."¹⁰⁰ But the crisis was averted through the great efforts of Mountbatten, who got the Combined Chiefs to agree to keep sufficient aircraft in theater until 1 June '44, and of the 14th Army staff, who were able to revamp their support plans and reallocate existing resources. Again, Slim's luck had held.



Photograph 4. The 'Catwalk' Kalewa-shwegyin Road

As extraordinary as the movements of 14th Army had been to the Irrawaddy, crossing the river was an even more spectacular accomplishment. To start, the Irrawaddy was a truly formidable obstacle (See Photograph 5):

The river itself offered serious problems in addition to its great width. South of the confluence between the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy, the width varied between three quarters of a mile to two miles or more even in the dry season. Its course varied from that shown on the map since it changed from year to year, due to the appearance and disappearance of sandbanks as the water dropped during the dry season. These sandbanks varied considerably in size, some being over a mile long and even up to a mile wide, while others were almost insignificant, though nevertheless a serious obstacle to navigation....The sandbanks left few places for a direct crossing, and the channels in between them were deep. At Nyaungu there was a direct crossing of about three quarters of a mile, but (the 7th Division was) unable to use this at the outset because of an eight-hundred-yard stretch of soft sandy beach on the near bank. To get vehicles to the water's edge would mean that the engineers would have had to lay track in full view of the enemy. This was unacceptable and it was clear that the initial crossing would have to be made diagonally, involving a distance of well over a mile. Except at Nyaungu itself, the far bank consisted of high cliffs, rising to a maximum of about a hundred feet with sheer faces. These gave full observation over (the British) side, and this view could be extended by anybody climbing to the top of one of the many pagodas which had been built, over the years, close to the bank. At intervals there were openings in the cliffs, made by chaungs, since dried-up; in the initial stages these would be the only route inland for vehicles. The excellent observation afforded to the enemy meant that movement near the banks would be greatly restricted by day. In addition, the dust made by (Br) vehicles was almost as bad as it had been in the desert; movement along the road which ran from Kanhla to Myitche would have to be closely controlled in daylight. This road was essential to the operation as it was the only real means by which (the Br) could get the heavy bridging lorries down to the crossing site. And the Japanese were holding Kanhla.¹⁰¹

And to cross the Irrawaddy, the 7th Division had very meager resources, especially compared to the elaborate resources available to their brothers in the European theater. Note the 7th's equipment for this formidable undertaking:



Photograph of the Irrawaddy. The plan of the crossing.

Assault boats	58
Folding boats	44
Field bridging equipment, trestles	4
Field bridging equipment, superstructure bays	18
Outboard motors, 9.8 h.p	98
Outboard motors, 22 h.p	20
Propulsion units	10
Motor boats	7
Class 40/60 rafts	4102

Only about half of this equipment was considered reliable--an estimate which proved fairly accurate. Little wonder that Slim remarked that the crossing was made with "a few bamboos and a ball of string".¹⁰³

The approach to battle was now complete. Slim's plan had, to this point, been conducted so successfully that victory was almost a foregone conclusion. On 10 February 1945, battle was joined. Slim ordered the 19th Division to break out of its bridgehead and head south to Mandalay. Two days later, he sent the 2d Division across the Irrawaddy, followed the next day by the 20th Division. These movements had exactly the effect Slim wanted, for the Japanese threw everything they had at these divisions to prevent the capture of Mandalay. With the Japanese concentrating north of the city, Slim sent the 7th Division across the river on 14 February. After some fitful mis-starts, to include the lead assault battalion getting hopelessly lost during their attempted crossing, the 7th had a secure bridgehead by 15 February, right on schedule. The 17th Division was immediately passed through the 7th, breaking out of the bridgehead on 21 February and heading for Meiktila.

The battles for Mandalay and Meiktila were a combination of swift armor action and brutal attrition. Major General Cowan's 17th Division quickly seized Meiktila. Its seizure was a devastating blow to Kimura. But once he realized what had happen, he threw every unit he could get his hands on against Cowan's

troops. The Japanese responded with their usual ferocity, even succeeding in surrounding the 17th Division by 15 March 1945. However, their hold was short-lived as Slim kept the 17th resupplied and reinforced by air. And Cowan employed some clever tactics by conducting an aggressive offensive-defensive plan. Leaving the minimum troops in position, he conducted a series of brilliant sweeps and spoiling attacks against the Japanese communications and support bases. This battle was so critical to Slim that he visited Meiktila at the height of the fighting. In *Defeat Into Victory*, he captures the essence of the battle as he describes a Gurkha-Punjabi tank-infantry team destroying a Japanese bunker. It was a stirring account of just one of the hundreds of small engagements that occurred during the battle, but it captures the essence of the 14th Army.¹⁰⁴ The Japanese finally conceded defeat and retreated south on 1 April '45.

The battle of Mandalay was of the same pattern as Meiktila. After rapidly gaining bridgeheads over the Irrawaddy, the three divisions of 33 Corps pressed on to Mandalay. The 19th Division quickly moved around the city to seal escape routes to the south and east. The 2d and 20th then surrounded the city from the west and north. In keeping with his directive that there would be no frontal attacks and his refusal to unnecessarily risk his soldiers' lives, Slim ordered the main Japanese defensive position in the city, Fort Dufferin, to be reduced by artillery prior to an assault. It took eleven days, but the fort fell with few 14th Army casualties.¹⁰⁵ Despite stiff enemy resistance everywhere, Mandalay fell to the 19th Division on 20 March '45. For all intents and purposes the Japanese Army was finished in Burma.

Slim's victory was complete. He had gambled everything that he could split his forces and send them to two widely separated objectives, deceive the

Japanese about his real intentions, then correctly time the operation to keep the Japanese off balance until it was too late. Thus he caught them against an anvil in Meiktila, struck with a hammer from Mandalay. We have two striking pieces of evidence of Slim's success. First, the Japanese were so fooled by Slim's deception that they were sure 4 Corps was north of Mandalay and still thought so *after* the war.¹⁰⁶ Second, at the conclusion of the battles of Mandalay and Meiktila, the Japanese forces available to Kimura in central Burma consisted of three infantry battalions and one artillery company, out of an original force of 5 divisions. This was complete victory.

Slim's analysis of what had gone wrong in the '42 retreat and his execution of Operation EXTENDED CAPITAL demonstrate beyond a doubt his mastery of the tasks of the strategic leader. He precisely defined his ends--the destruction of the Japanese Army in central Burma. He brilliantly devised a way to this end--the two pronged attack to seize Mandalay and Meiktila and place the Japanese between a hammer and anvil. His means--his indomitable 14th Army--was a product of his training and an execution of his steady dedication to the mission. His vision and plan to achieve that vision were brilliant. He had followed Clausewitz's injunction to make the destruction of the enemy his principle aim. And he had followed Sun Tzu's guidance to heed to the advantages of his plan and create situations which contributed to the plan's accomplishment. His ability to set priorities enabled the operation to be conducted despite limited resources. He revealed requisite flexibility by altering his plans in response to an anticipated enemy maneuver. Finally,

what Slim had in fact done was to initiate at short notice the most subtle, audacious and complex operation of his whole career. Its execution revealed--if the revelation was by now necessary--that Slim was a complete general, since every element of the military art was requisite if EXTENDED CAPITAL were not to fail. Deception

and surprise, flexibility, concentration on the objective, calculated risks, the solution of grave administrative problems, imagination, sang-froid, invigorating leadership--all the clichés of the military textbooks were simultaneously and harmoniously brought to life as Slim, with an absolute assurance, conceived and accomplished his masterpiece.¹⁰⁷

STRATEGIC LEADER COMPETENCIES. The final barometer of the strategic leader is his ability to see the big picture, to be technically competent, to tolerate ambiguity, and to communicate, both verbally and in writing. Slim met these criterion easily.

His ability to see the big picture was clearly demonstrated in his grasp of both the tactics it would take to defeat the Japanese (fighting when surrounded, air resupply, etc.), and his ability to rapidly change Operation CAPITAL into EXTENDED CAPITAL when intelligence indicated the Japanese were pursuing a different course than the one he originally expected. Both these events demonstrate Slim's ability to look beyond the immediate and see events to the second and third effects.

Slim's technical competence was demonstrated by his thorough analysis of both the operational and administrative/logistics requirements for CAPITAL. Only a general with a high order of competence could have overseen such a review, which led to a brilliant operational plan, backed by a realistic and do-able support plan. His own personal competence was demonstrated when he was commander of 15 Corps. He assumed command of the Corps immediately after the '42 retreat and was determined to begin a vigorous training program for all soldiers, to include himself. He reports that "the whole headquarters from the Corps Commander downwards went through qualifying courses in rifle, pistol,

Bren gun, bayonet, mortar, and grenade. I was not much good with the Bren gun, but kept my end up with the other weapons."¹⁰⁸ Thus we learn that Slim was competent at all levels, from basic soldier skills to those required of an army commander.

Slim's capacity to tolerate ambiguity was clearly demonstrated by his ability to successfully interact with many mercurial personalities that abounded in SEAC, none more so than Stilwell and Wingate. Additionally, Slim's ability to operate in an environment where the scope and amount of his resources might change at any moment is another clear indication of his capability to handle a vague, uncertain situation.

Finally, the competent strategic leader has to be able to communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing. Slim's ability to communicate verbally was demonstrated repeatedly during the rebuilding of the Army after the '42 retreat and during EXTENDED CAPITAL. As he was trying to rebuild the shattered British-Indian forces that had crawled out of Burma, he realized that one of the most effective ways of restoring a fighting spirit in the force was simply to talk to his soldiers and let them know what was going on. To this end, he made it a habit to attempt to visit every unit under his command. When it came to addressing the troops, Slim "was a master of the art of inspiring while informing."¹⁰⁹ And the EXTENDED CAPITAL plan for 33 Corps "required that both the Corps and division commanders take some real risks. But all the commanders believed that great results could not be achieved without taking risks, and, having been directed by Slim, in whom they had complete confidence, to accept the risks,"¹¹⁰ they received and carried out his plans impeccably. Further, his superb writing skills are still on display in his carefully wrought and

informed memoirs. Simply put, Slim could communicate with anybody through any medium. This one story sums up his communications gifts:

At some point during the advance from Imphal a young Indian artillery officer called Gupta (later Master-General of the Ordnance, Indian Army) was in the command post on his gun position. He looked round to find it occupied by a large unfamiliar figure. At that moment there came on the radio the most insistent of all signals, for a regimental shoot: 'Mike Target, Mike Target, Mike Target.' Gupta brushed the figure on one side and carried out the fire-plan. When it was finished the figure had disappeared, but as he emerged from his command post to get some air Gupta saw to his horror the red hat and unmistakable presence of his Army Commander. He began to stutter apologies, but Slim interrupted. 'Don't bother about that, my boy. If everybody worked like you we'd get to Rangoon a lot sooner!' Gupta was deeply moved by the instant humanity of Slim's reaction. What is more to the point, he was astonished to discover, some time later, that after this episode he was soldiering far better than he had ever thought it possible for him to do. The essence of Slim's achievement with 14th Army was precisely this—to communicate the faith that moves mountains.¹¹¹

If the strategist is defined as one who achieves the sum of ends, ways and means, then Slim was the consummate strategic leader. His understanding of war, his willingness to deal with ambiguity and strong personalities, and his magnificent ability to create a vision and a plan to achieve it enabled him to use the military objectives, military strategic concepts and military resources to defeat World War II's toughest opponent, the Japanese. Some may claim that Slim was only an operational level strategist, because others above him handled the various political and social aspects of strategy at the national level. That might be true, but it does not diminish Slim's achievements. He was the only Allied general to defeat a major Japanese army and retrieve a conquered territory through ground warfare alone. Because of this victory, there is no doubt that Slim passed the test of strategic leadership.¹¹²

Slim Passes the Challenges of Generalship

Slim may as well be measured against those "qualities necessary for a general and the conditions in which he has to exercise his calling."¹¹³ Again, the criteria will be as laid out by Field Marshal Lord Wavell and Slim himself. Further, Clausewitz's definition of military genius--"those gifts of mind and temperament that in combination bear on military activity"¹¹⁴--provide a standard by which to judge Slim.

Individual Robustness and the Ability to Withstand the Shock of War/Physical and Mental Fitness. Slim's physical and mental stamina in war is most clearly illustrated in this one fact: "To have been in continuous command of a (brigade, division), Corps and Army in action for so long (November 1940 - May 1945: 4 and one half years!) speaks volumes for his robustness."¹¹⁵ By contrast, no U.S. general was in combat longer than two years three months: that general was Stilwell who fought in Burma. Perhaps Slim's greatest demonstration of stamina was during the '42 retreat. During this arduous event, Slim kept his own over-committed Corps together and engaged the Japanese; moreover, he had to handle the many bandits and refugees clogging his route. Finally, his retreating corps traversed some of the most difficult, inhospitable terrain in the world. "The crises which followed in rapid succession and the plans which came to naught when the Chinese either could not or would not carry them out, were a continuous strain on Slim's equanimity. It needed a man of ultra robust character to stand up to the shocks and strain, and it was fortunate that

the men of Burcorps had a commander of that calibre to sustain them when misfortune overtook them."¹¹⁶

Moral Courage/The Will to Win. Both Slim and Wavell considered these to be essential traits of the successful general. The examples of Slim's willingness to "do the right thing" by following the courage of his convictions are legion. Two examples demonstrate this point. First, consider his conduct in the battles of Gallabat in Ethiopia and Deir-ez-Zor in Iraq. At Gallabat, Slim had taken counsel of his fears when, after successfully taking his objective, he let himself be talked out of staying in the town by his subordinates because they feared a counterattack by superior Italian forces. Slim was convinced that the Italians were too weak, and if he had attacked he would have defeated their forces in that part of Ethiopia. As he relates in *Unofficial History*, "like so many generals whose plans have gone wrong, I could find plenty of excuses for failure, but only one *reason* --myself. When two courses of action were open to me I had not chosen, as a good commander should, the bolder. I had taken counsel of my fears."¹¹⁷ However, by Deir-ez-Zor Slim had learned his lesson. To take the objective, he devised a two prong attack to take the town, with one prong having to make a wide swing out in the desert. The first attempt almost ended in disaster when the desert arm got lost and almost ran out of fuel. Slim's subordinates again counseled him to change his plan and make a frontal attack. Again the fears and doubts crept in, but he "remembered Gallabat, eight months before, when I had taken counsel of my fears, and missed my chance. This time I would not. I would listen to my hopes rather than to my fears. I would take the risk."¹¹⁸

A second example occurred during the '42 retreat, where:

His handling of Burcorps was a triumphant example of Napoleon's own principle, that in war the pre-eminent factor is the moral. He enabled his men to hope when hope seemed absurd, and their will to live sustained a will to fight. If his tactics were sometimes inadequate and his ambitions too large, this was a triviality by comparison with his (moral) leadership.¹¹⁹

As for his will to win, no general surpassed Slim's drive to defeat the enemy. Not only did he keep the essential goal of destroying the Japanese Army as his foremost objective, he was one of the very few senior leaders in World War II to so successfully analyze a defeat that the keys to victory developed from that analysis carried him to a string of battlefield successes unequalled in the war. However, the classic example of the will to win comes once again from the '42 retreat. Slim had assumed command of Burcorps on 13 March '42. He found his command consisted of two woefully under strength divisions, with no air support and virtually no supplies. They had already been retreating for over a month. And he had no clear instructions. Despite all of this, his first thoughts were how to stabilize the situation so he could counterattack: "If we could collect a mobile reserve, let them commit themselves to the attack, and then strike back in real strength,...we might give the (Japanese) a considerable jar. I made up my mind, therefore, that our object in Burma Corps should be to concentrate our two divisions with a view to counter-attacking at the earliest possible opportunity."¹²⁰ Here we see a general showing a will to win during the nadir of retreat. His corps was surviving to fight another day--and to win. He foresaw ways to win when lesser leaders would have questioned their force's ability to survive.

Professional Knowledge. While this trait has been covered in strategic leader competencies, there is one additional example of Slim's unparalleled understanding of modern war--his understanding and use of air power, both its advantages and limitations. He understood its many uses for his army: aerial resupply (especially to surrounded units), close air support, and troop movements. He knew it provided the difference between victory and defeat for the Allies in Burma. Maybe the best comment on this came from an airman, Air Marshal Sir John Baldwin, AOC 3d Tactical Air Force, Burma: "Slim was quicker to grasp the potentials and value of air support in the jungles of Burma than most Air Force officers. Particularly did he appreciate what the air required and was always ready to understand their difficulties and limitations."¹²¹ And Slim reciprocated. He insisted that his own and subordinate headquarters form close relationships with their air force counterparts. And, he was equally generous in his praise fully acknowledging "the skill, courage and devotion of the airmen, British and American, both in the air and on the ground, combined with the hard work and organizing ability of the soldiers, not only did (air resupply), but kept on doing it month after month....Ours was a joint land and air war; its result, as much a victory for the air forces as for the army."¹²²

Ability to 'Know the Men'/Train Soldiers. Many consider these to be Slim's strongest traits. We have already witnessed Slim's ability as a trainer; he was equally adept at "knowing the men". He knew the importance of morale, and he saw to it that his soldiers shared a high morale. He defined morale as "a state of mind. It is that intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something, without counting the cost to themselves; that makes them feel they are part of something greater than themselves."¹²³

For Slim, morale had three components: spiritual, intellectual and material. He realized that the morale of 14th Army was built upon the deeply held religious beliefs of the many sects of his soldiers--Christians, Hindus and Moslems. All three religions gave his soldiers an enduring sense of moral courage:

We had (the spiritual foundation); and we had the advantage over our enemies that ours was based on real, not false, spiritual values. If ever an army fought in a just cause we did. We coveted no man's country; we wished to impose no form of government on any nation. We fought for the free things of life, for the right to live our lives in our own way, as others could live theirs, to worship God in what faith we chose, to be free in body and mind and for our children to be free. We fought only because the powers of evil had attacked these things.¹²⁴

Once Slim had marshaled his principles of morale, he realized that the next vital step was to apply them. Then they should be recognized by the whole army. He felt there was only one way to deliver this, by a direct approach to the individual soldier. To execute this policy "we, my commanders and I, talked to units, to collections of officers, to headquarters, to little groups of men, to individual soldiers casually met as we moved around."¹²⁵ And Slim did not let the many languages of his army pose a barrier. He spoke the native tongue of almost every tribe, sect or nationality in his Army. However, sometimes he made the occasional mistake, like the time he addressed an Indian battalion only to be told by his aid that he had addressed the soldiers in Gurkhali (the language of the Gurkhas), instead of one of the Indian dialects.

When he talked to soldiers, Slim told the truth:

There was only one thing to do if my men were not to be sickened by hope deferred—admit to them the shortages, already only too obvious, but impress on them that:

(i) The Germans in Europe had to be beaten first. The Germans had a much higher scale of equipment than the Japanese. In fairness and common sense, therefore, the armies fighting them, however hard it was on us, should have first call on new equipment.

- (ii) Within this limit every responsible commander would do his utmost to get what we needed.
- (iii) If we could not get everything we wanted issued to us, we would either improvise it ourselves or do without.
- (iv) We should be short of many things but I would not ask the troops to do anything unless there was at least the minimum of equipment needed for the task.

These things were frankly put to the men by their commanders at all levels and, whatever their race, they responded.¹²⁶

Slim began putting this concept into practice even during the '42 retreat.

Many of his visits among the troops were recorded. The two following offer classic examples of Slim's relationship with his soldiers. The first comes from a period immediately after he had assumed command of 15 Corps, in May of 1942. According to Major-General O'Carroll-Scott, the Brigadier General Staff at that time:

When he arrived, he was tired, thin and had been ill: but there was ever a light in his eye and his humour—a gruff, no bloody nonsense sort of humour that was particularly his own—had certainly not left him. The fact that we became a happy and efficient Corps HQ stemmed from the humanity of Slim himself. He was ready to speak personally to every man in the Corps from Divisional Commander to junior clerk or soldier. When speaking in English, Gurkhali, Urdu or Pushtu it was always as one man to another—never the great commander to his troops. He was human, but never soft—far from it. He suffered not fools gladly but he was basically friendly and had the uncanny knack of creating a 'happy show' around him. He inspired us by his simplicity, his own rugged type of down to earth approach to men and events, his complete naturalness and his absolutely genuine humour. He was a great leader—true; he was a great commander—true: but to us he was, above all, the well-loved friend of the family.¹²⁷

A second example of his effect on morale occurred during the battles of Imphal/Kohima. According to one authority:

Morale fell so low among British troops that many men deserted. Others avoided taking antimalarial drugs, feeling it was better to suffer a fever in the hospital than to fight in the jungle. They dreaded the jungle and feared the Japanese. Day after day, Slim

visited units. Standing on the hood of a jeep, he assured his men that the jungle and the Japanese were less dangerous than they believed. He stressed personal discipline, speaking in several languages to units that included Indians, Gurkhas, and Africans. General Dorn had once said, "Then General Slim arrived. He was not afraid of anything and looked it." Coupled with that indomitable spirit was a memory that never forgot any lesson learned in an ill-fated campaign, and so he never made the same mistake twice. Suddenly, in the spring of 1944, he inspired the British troops until they fought as they had never fought before in Southeast Asia.¹²⁸

Slim's efforts to maintain morale must be weighed against the state of the soldiers he addressed. Not only were they from many countries, tribes and sects, speaking many different languages, but they were also often physically and mentally exhausted because of the atrocious conditions in which they fought. By May '44, Slim often faced soldiers under incredibly oppressive conditions:

exhaustion was increasing after many months of fighting without relief; digestions, already affected, had been further impaired until many were unable to eat at all and kept themselves going on a diet of rum and tinned milk, if their religion permitted alcohol; the advent of the monsoon had raised the incidence of disease, particularly scrub-typhus, and since malnutrition had weakened resistance and because it was more often than not impossible to evacuate the sick to hospital, many were dying in the jungle; sodden with rain, with no opportunity to dry them out, blankets had long been discarded and the soldiers lay down to sleep shivering in their dripping clothes to be bitten by leeches.¹²⁹

Slim was able to motivate men under these conditions for one simple reason: He appealed to all soldiers, "British, Indian or Gurkha", because he was one of them.¹³⁰ This is the best testament to Slim's ability to "know his soldiers".

Personal Courage - Willingness to Share Soldiers' Lot. If the great general shares the same dangers and deprivations as his soldiers, then Slim easily met this obligation. Besides the examples already mentioned--the

'42 retreat and the observation of the tank-infantry team at Meiktila--there is one small example that speaks volumes of his courage.

When any of the forward formations had to go on half rations, as throughout the campaign they often did, (Slim) used to put (his) headquarters on half rations too. It had a little practical effect, but as a gesture it was rather valuable, and it did remind the young staff officers with healthy appetites that it was urgent to get forward formations back to full rations as soon as possible.¹³¹

It is difficult (and totally impractical) for generals in modern wars to share the physical dangers with their soldiers on a day-to-day basis. However, it is a sign of courage for the general to recognize those dangers, and do everything to reduce them. He should ensure that every soldier in his organization shares those dangers to the extent his station or position allows. Slim's willingness to put those far from the battle, to include himself, under some of the same deprivation is an sterling example of such courage.

A Stern and Fair Disciplinarian. Slim defined discipline as meaning "every man, when things pass beyond his own authority or initiative, knows to whom to turn for further direction."¹³² His comments on discipline demonstrate an incisive understanding of its effect in an army. He observed, for instance, "it is not enough to be efficient; the organization must *look* efficient....We insisted on outward signs. In 14th Army we expected soldiers to salute officers--and officers to salute in return--both in mutual confidence and respect."¹³³

Slim's comments after the war indicate that he practiced what he preached:

The more modern war becomes, the more essential appear the basic qualities that from the beginning of history have distinguished armies from mobs. The first of these is discipline. We very soon learnt in Burma that strict discipline in battle and in bivouac was vital, not only for success, but for survival. Nothing is easier in jungle or dispersed fighting than for a man to shirk. If he has no stomach for advancing, all he has to do is to flop into the

undergrowth; in retreat, he can slink out of the rearguard, join up later, and swear he was the last to leave. A patrol leader can take his men a mile into the jungle, hide there, and return with any report he fancies. Only discipline—not punishment—can stop that sort of thing; the real discipline that a man holds to because it is a refusal to betray his comrades. The discipline that makes a sentry, whose whole body is tortured for sleep, rest his chin on the point of his bayonet because he knows, if he nods, he risks the lives of the men sleeping behind him. It is only discipline, too, that can enforce the precautions against disease, irksome as they are, without which an army would shrivel away. At some stage in all wars armies have let their discipline sag, but they have never won victory until they made it taut again; nor will they. We found it a great mistake to belittle the importance of smartness in turn-out, alertness of carriage, cleanliness of person, saluting, or precision of movement, and to dismiss them as naive, unintelligent parade-ground stuff. I do not believe that troops can have unshakable battle discipline without showing those outward and formal signs, which mark the pride men take in themselves and their units and the mutual confidence and respect that exists between them and their officers. It was our experience in a tough school that the best fighting units, in the long run, were not necessarily those with the most advertised reputations, but those who, when they came out of battle at once resumed a more formal discipline and appearance.¹³⁴

The single most distinctive example of Slim as the stern and fair disciplinarian are his efforts to conquer the effects of disease on his army:

My second great problem was health [the first was supply, and the third, morale]. In 1943, for every man evacuated with wounds we had one hundred and twenty evacuated sick. The annual malaria rate alone was 84 percent per annum of the *total* strength of the army and was still higher among the forward troops . . . A simple calculation showed me that in a matter of months at this rate my army would have melted away. Indeed it was doing so under my eyes.

Good doctors are no use without good discipline. More than half the battle against disease is fought not by doctors, but by regimental officers. It is they who see that the daily dose of mepacrine (an antimalarial drug) is taken . . . if mepacrine was not taken, I sacked the commander. I only had to sack three: by then the rest had got my meaning.

Slowly, but with increasing rapidity, as all of us, commanders, doctors, regimental officers, staff officers and NCOs united in the drive against sickness. Results began to appear. On the chart that

hung on my wall the curve of admissions to hospitals and malaria in forward treatment units sank lower and lower, until in 1945 the sickness rate for the whole Fourteenth Army was one per thousand per day.¹³⁵

Slim built this success on two pillars. He made the health of the troops a command responsibility, and he organized Malaria Forward Treatment Units (MFTA) close to the front lines. Ironically, Slim offered a shining example of not following his own command guidance. He contracted malaria because he took a bath after sunset, a practice forbidden by the Commander, 14th Army! The MFTAs enabled front-line units to get their stricken soldiers to a treatment facility within twenty four hours then back to their units within a matter of weeks. Additionally, malaria treatment did not strain the lines of communication by necessitating transport of infected soldiers vast distances to many hospitals. Most importantly, it made sure that soldiers who got sick intentionally to avoid combat were cured quickly and returned to the front.¹³⁶

Slim unquestionably understood discipline and its effect on an army. By his own admissions and observations, his army could not have accomplished all they did without a strong sense of discipline, fairly applied. The following fact alone demonstrates Slim's capabilities as a stern and fair disciplinarian: no army in World War II had a lower incidence of misbehavior or inadequacy.¹³⁷

Sense of Humor. Slim's humor is the stuff of legends. Slim's sense of humor comes through vividly in his books, so often others accounts of it pale in comparison. Wavell asserted that a general must have a sense of humor, especially when things are darkest. *Defeat Into Victory* offers the classic example of such a time. Slim describes one of the numerous crises he faced during the '42 retreat:

I stepped out of my van feeling about as depressed as a man could. There, standing in a little half-circle waiting for me, were a couple of

my own staff, an officer or two from the Tank Brigade, (General) Sun, and the Chinese liaison officers. They stood there silent and looked at me. All commanders know that look. They see it in the eyes of their staffs and their men when things are really bad, when even the most confident staff officer and the toughest soldier want holding up, and they turn where they *should* turn for support—to their commander. And sometimes he does not know what to say. He feels very much alone.

'Well, gentlemen,' I said, putting on what I hoped was a confident, cheerful expression, 'it might be worse!'

One of the group, in a sepulchral voice, replied with a single word: 'How?'

I could cheerfully have murdered him, but instead I had to keep my temper.

'Oh,' I said, grinning, 'it might be raining!'

Two hours later, it was—hard. As I crept under a truck for shelter I thought of that fellow and wished I *had* murdered him.¹³⁸

Slim also loved to tell Gurkha stories.

General Slim's favorite Gurkha story was on the fantastic side and was built around the Gurkha's renowned skill at fighting with the kukri. It was about a Gurkha who met a Jap in combat. The Jap took a swipe at him with his Samurai sword, and the Gurkha slashed back with his razor-sharp kukri. The Jap jeered at him for missing. 'Missed?' hissed the Gurkha. 'That's what you think. Just sneeze or bow to your ancestors and see what happens.'¹³⁹

Perhaps the best description of Slim's humor has been recalled by one of his Corps Commanders: "There was no 'brass hat' about him", wrote General Messervy. 'The strength of character in his face emphasized by the strong jaw and firm mouth was lightened by his eyes which were ever ready to twinkle, while his quick brain could produce lightning and amusing quips. The story is told of an occasion when General Slim addressed the officers and men of a Highland regiment. At the conclusion, a man jumped to his feet and exclaimed: 'Don't worry, sir! we'll follow you anywhere.' Without a moment's hesitation, Slim retorted: 'Don't you be so sure. I shall be a long way behind you!'"¹⁴⁰

Humor was not only a natural part of his personality, it was a tool he used to communicate with his soldiers. He used it with the touch of a master.

Personal Integrity. Our review of his strategic leadership is fraught with evidence of Slim's integrity. Especially noteworthy was his sense of obligation to acknowledge his failures of generalship after the retreat of '42. Further, he was quick to acknowledge his soldier's valor and sacrifice in rescuing him from his mistakes during the Imphal/Kohima battles. Finally, only a very honest leader would confess that his violation of his own anti-malaria code led to his contracting the disease.

Ability To Be a Good 'Picker' of Subordinates. As with everything else about Slim, there are abundant examples of his ability to judge other men's capabilities.

First and foremost, he resisted the temptation of taking the cream of his staff officers from command to command with him. He felt this practice denuded lower formations and forced out worthy performers at the next headquarters. So, with the exception of his aide, he took over whatever staff he found at his new headquarters. Slim saw this as an excellent way to raise morale: it demonstrated his confidence in the new staff and made them determined to ensure that confidence was not misplaced.¹⁴¹

Likewise, Slim picked great subordinates. Three excellent examples are his Chief of Administration, a corps commander, and a division commander. Slim had first met Major General "Alf" Snelling in Iraq when he was his Administrative Officer at Deir-ez-Zor. There he had first worked miracles for Slim, enabling him to win this battle. After his transfer to Burma, Slim realized that the campaign would be above all a supply and transport problem, and he

went after the best possible man to take charge of these areas. He asked for Snelling.¹⁴² Again and again in *Defeat Into Victory*, Slim pays great tribute to his 'administrative miracle worker'. There is no doubt that, if asked, Slim would have said that the victory in Burma belonged to Snelling as much as anyone for the unceasing stream of logistical wonders, from the management of land and air transport over vast distances to his uncanny ability to procure essential supplies when there seemed to be none. That Snelling was this good was, in large measure, not only a tribute to his efforts, but as well to his boss's leadership.

Lieutenant General Frank Messervy had a colorful career. He had started the war in command of the 7th Armored Division in Western Desert. However, he was relieved by General Ritchie during the second battle of Tobruk. He was transferred to Burma where he assumed command of the 7th Indian Division. He participated in the Second Arakan campaign. Despite having his division headquarters overrun, he led the 7th Division to a decisive victory in this battle. After the Imphal/Kohima battle, Slim was looking for a new 4 Corps Commander, since Lieutenant General Scoones had been promoted and transferred to India. Slim chose Messervy because he "had the temperament, sanguine, inspiring, and not too calculating of odds, that I thought would be required of the tasks I designed for 4 Corps."¹⁴³ The task Slim had designed for Messervy was the movement of 4 Corps through the Gangaw Valley to take Meiktila. As we have seen, Slim was not disappointed. Again, Slim picked a superb subordinate.

The final example of Slim's impressive capability to pick outstanding subordinates is Major General Pete Rees. Rees, like Messervy, was relieved of command of the 10th Indian Division during the second battle of Tobruk. He was transferred to Burma and assumed command of the 19th Indian Division. Slim

relates two favorite stories about Rees. The first is about his very short, very vigorous and intrepid leader--known by his troops as the 'pocket Napoleon'--tells "what he lacked in inches he made up by the miles he advanced. Whether he was hallooing on his troops from the roadside or leading them in his jeep, he was an inspiring divisional commander. The only criticism I made was to point out to him that the best huntsmen did not invariably ride ahead of their hounds."¹⁴⁴

His second story is even more illustrative:

It was not until the 11th March (1945) that (Mandalay) hill was completely in our hands. When, shortly afterwards, I visited it, the blackened marks of fire and the sights and stench of carnage were only too obvious, while distant bumps and bangs and the nearer rattle of machine-guns showed that the clearing of the city was still going on. Through all this noise and the clatter of men clearing a battlefield, came a strange sound—singing. I followed it. There was General Rees, his uniform sweat-soaked and dirty, his distinguishing red scarf rumpled round his neck, his bush hat at a jaunty angle, his arm beating time, surrounded by a group of Assamese soldiers whom he was vigorously leading in the singing of Welsh missionary hymns. The fact that he sang in Welsh and they in Khasi only added to the harmony. I looked on admiringly. My generals had character. Their men knew them and they knew their men. ¹⁴⁵

Again, Slim was rewarded by his faith in a subordinate. Rees repaid this trust by leading his division in the capture of Mandalay.

Slim was the consummate 'picker of subordinates'. He was able to size up his subordinates and put the right person in the right job. And, in the case of these three subordinates, he did it with a miracle worker and two retreads.

The Commander and His Headquarters. The general must effectively manage his staff and subordinates. We have noted throughout how effectively Slim communicated. Beyond his communication skills, he related to his headquarters in three other significant ways: First, consider the size of Slim's

headquarters. He always kept them small, with just enough people to do the job. No frills were allowed. For example, when he took over 15 Corps, the first thing he did was make it mobile. This required a lean organization and simple equipment. It also included physical training for every man in the headquarters, from the commanding general, through the staff officers, to the cooks and clerks.¹⁴⁶

Next, when Slim organized his headquarters, he observed the old British system of acting as his own Chief of Staff rather than the American system of a designated chief to control the staff. He preferred to interact with his staff subordinates directly. Consider Slim's method of planning. He would begin by discussing the outline of a plan with his Brigadier General Staff, Administration chief, and Air Force counterpart. As the planning process continued, other staff officers were brought in where appropriate. This whole process was very collegial. All were at liberty to make suggestions and recommendations. Interestingly, Slim always developed his concept prior to being briefed on the Japanese capabilities and intentions. His purpose was to make the enemy conform to him, not to "fit" his plan to the enemy. Slim summed up this process by saying "I suppose dozens of operations orders were given in my name, but I never, throughout the war, actually wrote one myself. I always had someone who could do that better than I could. One part of the order I did, however, draft myself--the intention...It should, therefore, be worded by the commander himself."¹⁴⁷

Finally, Slim made his own intelligence estimates, for he seemed always unsatisfied with staff work in intelligence. During the '42 retreat, Slim had reported that he was seriously hamstrung by a lack of even minimum intelligence.

In fact, he tried to make up for this shortcoming by developing his own intelligence service made up of volunteer officers, loyal Burmese villagers and British civilians who had lived and worked in Burma before the war. The results were barely adequate at best, but they were all he could get. As the war progressed, Slim never felt the intelligence services improved. He wrote:

I had throughout been conscious that...our intelligence.... was far from being as complete or as accurate as in other theaters. We never made up for the lack of methodically collected intelligence or the intelligence organization which should have been available to us when the war began. We knew something of the Japanese intentions, but little of the dispositions of their reserves, and practically nothing about one of the most important factors that a general has to consider--the character of the opposing commanders.¹⁴⁸

In fact, there has been considerable debate about the effect that ULTRA played in Slim's victories. Slim's veiled reference that 'we knew something of Japanese intentions' implies that ULTRA did provide some specific intelligence on the enemy. There is also ample evidence to indicate that there was an ULTRA cell at SEAC Headquarters. However, Slim emphatically says 'I had not at my disposal,' he wrote later of the Imphal battles, 'the sources of information of the enemy's intentions that some more fortunate commanders in other theaters were able to invoke', which seems a fairly clear reference to his lack of ULTRA intelligence.¹⁴⁹ This point is confirmed by Colonel Stephen K. Fitzgerald in "MAGIC and ULTRA in the China-Burma-India Theater":

The exploitation of MAGIC in the CBI yielded more in the strategic realm than in the operational. It failed to provide advance warning of the initial Japanese invasion of Burma, of the Japanese offensive against India, or of the 1944 ICHI-GO offensive in China. It did confirm the Japanese OB in early 1943 and the transfer of air assets elsewhere at that time. Tactically, it often provided confirmation, in conjunction with ULTRA, of the results of the aerial efforts of the Tenth and Fourteenth Air Forces. Perhaps its greatest value was to alert the Allies to the Japanese fixation with amphibious attack against southwest Burma.

This is hardly the stuff of successful operational planning. In fact, it confirms Slim's assertion that he was served by less than sterling intelligence during the Burma campaign. The clearest example of this shortcoming was the failure of the intelligence system to inform Slim that General Kimura had succeeded General Kawabe in command of Japanese forces in Burma after the battle of Imphal/Kohima. Accordingly, Slim based his plan on his knowledge of Kawabe's previous performance. When he found out that Kimura had taken over and instituted a new plan, he had to react accordingly. Slim's flexibility, not accurate intelligence, enabled him to save the day by changing CAPITAL into EXTENDED CAPITAL.

The magnitude of Slim's accomplishments increase, for unlike his counterparts in other theaters, Slim had to rely on his own forces for intelligence. While the amount he got was obviously adequate to the task, the fact that he had to plan and fight his battles with minimum knowledge about his enemy only adds to the luster of his generalship.

The Ability to Make Ones Own Luck. If luck is defined as being bold, then Slim was a very lucky commander. His luck began at Deir-ez-Zor when he took the bold course of action, through the '42 retreat when he decided to save his force, then trusting his troops to execute his new jungle fighting techniques at Imphal/Kohima. However, the best summation of his luck is provided by Geoffrey Evans in *Slim as Military Commander*.

If luck is expected to form part of a general's equipment, it played no part in Slim's victory. This sprang from his meticulous planning, based on an uncanny ability to see into the future. Always one move and sometimes more in advance of the enemy, it may be said he was also at times ahead of his superior commanders. Proof of this latter fact is Admiral of the Fleet Mountbatten's remark that almost invariably when he visited Slim to discuss some fresh proposition, he found it had already been considered and plans prepared. And he added:

Besides his great qualities as a leader in the field, Slim was a master of strategy, tactics and logistics, the Meiktila/Mandalay operation being a classic example. It was a superb achievement by him and his 14 Army. His plan was as brilliant in its conception as in its subsequent successful execution. It was a bold plan relying for its fulfillment on secrecy, on speed and taking great administrative risks.¹⁵⁰

In sum, Slim met every quality of generalship laid down by Wavell and even those he outlined himself. He would not have achieved the great things he did without a firm grasp of his profession, the qualities necessary for success, and the courage to put them into practice. Two comments by Slim's seniors best describe Slim, the general. The first is from U.S. LTG Wheeler, Deputy SEAC Commander: "General Slim inspired all of us with his competence and courage. He was regarded with particular admiration by all the Americans with whom he associated, and was frequently referred to by them as the American ideal of a great combat leader."¹⁵¹ The second is the ultimate complement from his boss, Mountbatten, who said "personally, I consider Slim was the finest general the Second World War produced."¹⁵² Nothing more need be said about Slim the general.

...And the Breaking of the Glass Ceiling

The concept of the "glass ceiling" has been given to us mainly by the feminist movement. It says certain individuals or groups of individuals can rise only so high in an organization because of some form of discrimination, such as the denial of advancement based on gender, race or previous associations. The classic example is the woman executive who is able to rise through an organization on merit and hard work only to be denied advancement to a position in senior management (the board room) simply because she is a woman. She can almost get to the top and can see it through a "glass ceiling", but her gender alone prevents her upward movement. And she doesn't have the strength to break the ceiling by herself.

This concept applies nicely to Slim's career, especially during World War II. We can only speculate about the reasons for his inability to break the barrier. We can make strong influences based on the history of the British and Indian armies. A brief overview is warranted to fully understand this issue.

In *A Matter of Honor*, Philip Mason tells the story of the Indian Army under British rule. He says that after the great mutiny of 1857, a new army was built. Its soldiers belonged to a society with a long tradition of soldiering and were linked to each other in a network of caste, villages and family bonds. With their British officers, they formed in the later Victorian period a highly professional military order, displaying a remarkable sense of duty and service and great loyalty to the regiment and, remotely, to the Crown. By 1939, Britain had two armies, one in England and one in India.¹⁵³

The British Army in India comprised two distinct factors: the British service, whose combat units were wholly manned by British personnel, and the Indian Army whose soldiers were Indians but whose officers were, in the main, British. The Gurkha regiments, whose fearless little soldiers were recruited in the kingdom of Nepal, formed the Gurkha brigade which was part of the Indian Army. Except for very few independent formations such as the 2nd Division, whose units and services were exclusively of the British service, many Indian fighting foundations included British integrated with Indian and Gurkha battalions. Thus a common brigade formation of three battalions would constitute one British, one Indian, and one Gurkha unit. The Indian Army had fine traditions and no one could question the proven fighting ability of the Indian divisions serving in the Middle East, but it was, uniquely, a club. The club had its own internal factions; those who served with the Gurkhas regarded themselves as significantly superior, and perhaps more fortunate, than those who served with other Indian regiments. But all were agreed that service with the Indian Army had a better rating than British Army service. These facts were financially apparent to British service officers receiving a considerably lower rate of pay than their counter parts in the Indian service.¹⁵⁴

This is the army Slim joined in 1919. His service with the Gurkhas shaped not only his growth as a soldier, but placed him squarely in the informal struggle between the 'English Army' and the Indian Army. In fact, Slim said that he had "trained in that nursery of good soldiers, the Indian Frontier."¹⁵⁵ During World War II, his Indian Army ties would have a significant effect on his career, both good and bad.

The first such occurrence was good: it resulted in Slim getting command of Burcorps. As we have seen, Slim made quite a name for himself both as a student and instructor in the various staff colleges he attended. Every senior officer who commented on his work during this period used superlatives in declaring that he was a man marked for a great future. At this time Slim met many of his future Burma companions--among them Cowan, who was to command 17th Indian Division, under him for three years; Snelling, his future

administrative chief; and W.F. Hasted, his chief engineer. Each was among Slim's most ardent admirers. An additional admirer was General Nye, the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff (VCIGS), who had been enamored by Slim during his time at Camberley. These and others were responsible for Slim getting Burcorps. In March of '42, General Alexander was looking for a general to activate a corps to control the widely displaced British units in Burma. At the strong urging of Cowan and some of his staff members, Alexander asked General Alanbrooke, CIGS, for Slim. Alanbrooke did not know Slim, but Nye persuaded him Slim was the man for the job. On 13 March 1942, Slim was given command.¹⁵⁶

The next development also supported Slim's advancement. When Slim assumed command of Burcorps, he found that not only Cowan but also Major General Bruce Scott were to be in command of his two divisions. Of his two subordinates, Slim said:

By a trick of fate for which I shall always be very thankful, Scott, Cowan, and I all came from the 1st Battalion, 6th Gurkhas. We had served and lived together for twenty-odd years; we—and our wives—were the closest friends; our children had been brought up together in the happiest of regiments. I could not have found two men in whom I had more confidence or with whom I would rather have worked. The fact that we were on these terms was more than a help in the tough times ahead. It meant that we understood one another, that each knew how the others would react and that the most searching tests would still find us a team.

This close association would find its expression in many ways, from shared thoughts on how to conduct a battle to the ability to talk to each other in Gurkhali when there was a suspicion that the Japanese were using signals intercept. All three were fluent in the language. Many Japanese understood English, but practically none understood Gurkhali.¹⁵⁷

Now Slim's career took a turn for the worse. Although Lieutenant General Noel Irwin was an Indian Army officer, he did not know Slim. Their first meeting was a disaster and things went down hill from there. Irwin was the first to fire Slim. When Slim's Burcorps emerged from Burma at the end of the '42 retreat, they had been defeated, but they had also come back as a disciplined force. They expected to be treated as such--soldiers who had done their duty and now needed a rest. Instead of finding clothing, blankets, and tentage, they found nothing. In fact, the 17th Division was told to bivouac on the open side of a hill during the monsoon! Slim's retelling of this story, even some thirteen years later, was still full of bitterness and resentment at the way his soldiers were treated. He states "the attitude adopted towards them by certain commanders and their staffs was that they were only to be dragooned into some show of soldierly spirit by hectoring and sarcasm. As Brigadier Taffy Davis wryly commented, "The slogan in India seems to be, 'Isn't that Burma Army annihilated yet'." ¹⁵⁸ One of the main protagonists was Irwin.

At the time of the retreat, Irwin was commanding 4 Corps, which gave him overall responsibility for receiving Burcorps into India. Irwin spoke harshly and critically of the way Slim's troops arrived. Slim said, 'I never thought an officer whose command I was about to join could be so rude to me.' Irwin replied, 'I can't be rude. I'm senior.' ¹⁵⁹

One of Slim's biographers does not mince words in describing Irwin:

Irwin was a man whose considerable intellectual gifts was marred by a dictatorial and egocentric temperament. He had a way of treating subordinates like coolies deserving neither trust nor consideration. One facet of this self-regarding mind was an inability to decentralize; since none could be trusted but himself, he must see to everything. But insensitivity and inflexibility were also dominant traits in this complex character. ¹⁶⁰

Slim's next encounter with Irwin was during the first battle of the Arakan. This battle came about because Churchill, over the 'grand strategist' and spurred on by the American victory at Midway, instructed Wavell he wanted to recapture Rangoon. Wavell proposed an advance down the Arakan peninsula (See Map 8) as a preliminary requirement for a securing a base from which to conduct an amphibious operation to capture Rangoon. Irwin, now in charge of Eastern Army Command, was given the mission.¹⁶¹

The operation was a fiasco from the start. Irwin initially moved Slim's Corps headquarters out of the area and moved his headquarters forward to personally supervise the operation. Then he assigned just two divisions the task of clearing the peninsula. As British forces advanced down the peninsula, Japanese resistance became very stiff. Irwin's response was to ram in more brigades under the 14th Indian Division, until that one headquarters was trying to control nine brigades, the equivalent of three divisions.¹⁶²

Slim watched "with growing anxiety the progress of the Arakan offensive."¹⁶³ When he offered advice, it was ignored. Finally not even Irwin could control all the aspects of the operation. He sent Slim into the fray, initially only to evaluate the situation and make recommendations to him. But as the situation continued to deteriorate, he had Slim move his Corps Headquarters to Arakan and assume control of the battle. What Slim had to do was again make order out of chaos. Despite his best efforts to resume the offensive using his new jungle tactics that would work so well in the next Arakan battle, he realized that 'the troops had been in action for the past weeks, were fought out and many

of them could not be relied on to hold anything.¹⁶⁴ Subsequently, Slim once again lead the British-Indian forces on a retreat, this time back up the peninsula-- Slim's second retreat.

The difference in the '42 retreat and this one was that Slim made a correct analysis of what had gone wrong and was determined to change it. But Irwin just wanted to assign blame, and blame he did, starting with Slim. In a letter to Slim, Irwin sarcastically noted that "17 (British-Indian) battalions have been chased about by possibly 6 (Japanese battalions), a sad but realistic commentary on the present fighting."¹⁶⁵ Irwin even criticized specific units. "I'll have courts of inquiry all ready for such cases, including the loss of equipment when I get the 14 Division troops out."¹⁶⁶ Apparently, Irwin was most perturbed at the potential of his being blamed for this debacle. In an 8 May 1943 letter to Wavell, Irwin stated, "From the public's point of view, undoubtedly it will be the Commanders who will go through it and will be held responsible for the defeat. In fact, although the Commanders are far from being much good (a not too veiled reference to Slim), the cause unquestionably lies in the inability of the troops to fight."¹⁶⁷ The final straw came on 26 May '43 when Irwin sent a letter to Slim severely criticizing his performance and intimating he would relieve him of command. Slim had met his first "glass ceiling".

Slim's luck-of-the-general now emerged. While Irwin was planning to sack Slim, Churchill and Alanbrooke had realized that Irwin had lost touch with reality. Thus they decided that a shake-up of Eastern Army Command was in order. Only a few hours after Slim received Irwin's letter, he received another letter informing him that Irwin had himself been relieved and would be replaced by General Giffard. That same day, in a rare moment of grace, Irwin sent Slim a

classic message that simply said 'You're not sacked--I am'.¹⁶⁸ Slim had been pulled through the ceiling for the first time.

The next ceiling Slim would run into again involved his new boss, and it came at the time of his greatest battlefield victory. The story of General Giffard's inability to get along with Mountbatten and his subsequent relief was recounted in our earlier discussion of Slim's strategic leadership. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Sir Oliver Leese, a member of the 'English Army', who had come from Italy where he had commanded the Eighth Army. There he was a protégé of Field Marshal Montgomery. In fact, Montgomery told Leese that, because Mountbatten's knowledge of war was not very great, he "ought to go out there as his Army C-in-C and keep him on the rails."¹⁶⁹ This injunction would cause Mountbatten as much trouble with Leese as Mountbatten encountered with Giffard.

Leese assumed his position as Commander, Allied Land Forces, SouthEast Asia (ALFSEA) on 10 November 1944. One of the first things he did was bring in many of his staff officers from Eighth Army (in contrast to Slim's practice of taking what he found) because he was convinced that the theater's pace of war was too slow and needed invigorating. This move was noted by Slim, who said Leese's staff "had a good deal of desert sand in its shoes and was rather inclined to thrust Eighth Army down our throats."¹⁷⁰

Leese arrived just before the execution of Operation CAPITAL. Almost immediately he ran into his first incident with Slim. Slim revised the plan for CAPITAL when he realized the Japanese would not fight north of the Irrawaddy as planned. Instead, he issued instructions on 18 December 1944 for EXTENDED CAPITAL. The interesting thing about this sequence of events is that Slim issued

these instructions, which were a major change in the principle SEAC plan, without informing either Mountbatten or Leese until after his two corps had begun their new movements. When asked about this, Slim replied that a change in plans was "something I should do myself without asking for approval from ALFSEA or SEAC. So I did not ask for sanction."¹⁷¹ While not recorded, one can surmise this was a result of two things: Slim's unshakable faith in his plan and his army's ability to execute it, and Slim's reaction to Leese's overbearing ways.

Leese's next incident was with Mountbatten. As originally intended, Operation DRACULA was the plan for the amphibious invasion of Rangoon. The plan was canceled when it became obvious that there would be insufficient amphibious craft for the operation. However, in March 1944, Slim proposed a reduced DRACULA, which would take Rangoon from the rear while his 14th Army attacked from the north. Slim knew he would need the port if his army was to survive in southern Burma during the monsoon. Mountbatten was delighted with the idea; Leese was not. Things finally came to a head when Leese tried to delete an airborne operation from the plan, an operation Mountbatten fully supported. Mountbatten ended up having to fly to Leese's headquarters to personally order him to reinstate the airborne operation in the plan. In Mountbatten's description of the event to his wife, he says Leese was "a stupid, vain and dangerous man, and like all bullies, collapses when really stood up to." If there had ever been a honeymoon between the two, this incident ended it.¹⁷²

Finally, Leese attempted to relieve Slim. On 3 May '45, Leese went to Mountbatten with a proposal for the reorganization of the ALFSEA command structure. He claimed Slim was a tired man who deserved relief. He added that

Slim was not proficient in amphibious warfare, which would be the major operations undertaken in 1945, especially Operation ZIPPER, the invasion of Malaya. He proposed Lieutenant General Christison, commander of Slim's old 15 Corps, to replace him because he had more experience in amphibious warfare, having commanded DRACULA. Slim would, after leave, mop up Burma with a new force, 12th Army. By May '45, Rangoon had been captured and the Japanese Army was reduced to stragglers trying to infiltrate back to Malaya.¹⁷³ The sources differ on Mountbatten's response. Some say he did not disagree with Leese, while others say that he profoundly disagreed. The one thing Mountbatten did concur with was that Slim was tired and needed a rest. He insisted there not be the slightest indication that Slim was being removed from his command. Regardless, of what occurred, Mountbatten told Leese he could sound out Slim on his idea.¹⁷⁴

Leese left with what he thought was a clear directive. He first sent a telegram to Alanbrooke telling him of his plans. He then flew to Christison's headquarters and told him 'Dickie considers Bill a tired man and I must say I agree, but he's been through a lot. I have been told to ease him out gently and you are to take over 14th Army at once'.¹⁷⁵ Next, he flew to Slim's headquarters at Meiktila on 7 May '45. When he reached his headquarters, his greeting was: "Before we talk of anything else, I must tell you that I have decided to give Christison command of 14th Army.... I do not consider you capable of planning a large-scale amphibious operation, so I do not think it would be fair to either the 14th Army or yourself to leave you in command of it."¹⁷⁶ Slim was stunned. He had just concluded his greatest campaign, which destroyed the Japanese Army in Burma and yielded the capture of Mandalay and Rangoon. Slim, in his usual

professional manner and without acrimony, told Leese that if his superior had lost confidence in him, he was entitled to remove him. However, he would not accept transfer to 12th Army and would instead retire. The individual versions of this encounter show the chasm between the two men. Leese said he left Slim 'thinking it over and at heart happy'. Slim's diary for that date had two entries: "Meiktila airstrip still out. Sacked 1530."¹⁷⁷ Slim had run into his second "glass ceiling".

When word of Slim's intended relief was revealed, a fire storm broke out. Sarcastic comments referring to 'Oliver Twist' and 'that silk-handkerchief-waving guardsman' were heard from many quarters in 14th Army. It got worse. Many of Slim's senior officers threatened to resign. Indeed troops became mutinous. Before Mountbatten could act, he received a blunt signal from Alanbrooke stating his astonishment at Leese's proposal. He said he had complete confidence in Slim and that no changes in the SEAC command structure were to be made without Mountbatten personally requesting such from the CIGS. Mountbatten hurriedly conferred with Leese and told him Slim's dismissal must be reversed. Leese was contrite and admitted overstepping his bounds. Even though he and Leese were at loggerheads by this time, Mountbatten was reluctant to relieve Leese having already fired his predecessor. But he realized that the damage had been done between Slim and Leese, even though Slim stated he could continue to work for Leese--with reservations. In the end, Alanbrooke left Mountbatten no choice. It was decided that Slim would replace Leese as ALFSEA. Twice Slim had relieved his relievers and twice he had been pulled through the 'glass ceiling'.¹⁷⁸

This situation reveals the trials of an English general trying to command an Indian army. It was exacerbated by Leese's inability to understand either the temper of his environment or the personalities of his subordinate commanders. And it was greatly complicated by his insistence on importing his own staff, even though most of them did not understand the war in SouthEast Asia. In the end, the resentment he and his cronies caused outdid most of the good they achieved.¹⁷⁹

Finally, Slim's Indian Army ties became part of his rivalry with the second great World War II British general, Field Marshal Montgomery. By 1948, Slim had retired from the Army and was serving as an executive with the Railway. During his retirement, he had become famous in England through a series of BBC broadcasts entitled 'Courage', where he encouraged the people of Great Britain to work together and rebuild their war torn country. His broadcasts caught the attention of Prime Minister Atlee. Because of this, things were again about to change for Slim.

Montgomery, who was serving as the CIGS, had been appointed the first Chairman of the Western Union's military command (the forerunner of NATO). So, a new Chief was needed. Slim's name had been prominently mentioned for the job. His biggest booster was Mountbatten, who visited Atlee to campaign for Slim's appointment. Armed with these recommendations and his own personal high regard for him, Atlee decided that Slim should be the next CIGS. However, in his typical fashion, Montgomery informed the Prime Minister that Slim would never do. Slim was a 'sepoy general' who was neither known nor would be accepted by the British Army. And, anyway, Montgomery informed Atlee, Slim's

and, most importantly, why he fought. And he knew how to lead these soldiers in combat. In fact, by war's end, Slim stated "my Indian divisions after 1943 were among the best in the world. They would go anywhere, do anything, go on doing it, and do it on very little."¹⁸¹ It is apparent that this was the root cause of Slim's great bitterness at with way Irwin treated his soldiers on their emergence from the hellish Burma jungles during the retreat of '42. Slim detested the way his Indian soldiers were received, because he was one of them. Irwin was not.

While Slim's Indian Army ties caused him to run into his first 'glass ceiling', the same ties helped him through it. As noted, Irwin was fired by Churchill and Alanbrooke. Both were old Indian army hands, especially Alanbrooke. Their decision had been strongly influenced by Wavell and Auchinleck, two other 'old India hands'. Wavell and Auchinleck realized that Irwin had gone astray and that Slim was the one who had made the most out of a bad situation. They wanted some one with Slim's professionalism, born in the Indian Army school, in charge. So Slim was their man.¹⁸²

The Leese and Montgomery episodes were clearly a result of Slim's Indian Army ties. Both were from the 'English Army'¹⁸³ and had virtually no experience with the Indian Army. This was most apparent in Leese's heavy-handed approach when he took over as the ALFSEA, and Montgomery's comment that Slim was simply a "sepoy general". Neither knew Slim personally prior to their immediate association with him. Subsequently, they saw him as 'one of those Indian soldiers'. Such disregard was almost natural.

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because he realized that Slim's leadership, not Leese, was responsible for the Burma victory. Atlee pulled him through the third time because of his character. He realized Slim was an outstanding general and a great leader. In both cases, Slim's distinctive qualities compelled his advancement. His fine character and humanity prevailed.

But Slim's rough passage through the "glass ceiling" was even more complex. As noted, Winston Churchill was an 'old India hand'. But when World War II started, he did not greatly admire Slim. In fact he is quoted as saying 'I cannot think that a man with a name like Slim can be any good.'¹⁸⁴ This comment came about as a result of Churchill's habit of making rather harsh judgments of anyone who failed on the battlefield. Churchill seems to have known little of Slim, except that he was involved in the '42 retreat and the debacle of the First Arakan campaign. By the time Slim started his string of great victories, Churchill was convinced the leaders he had sent to SEAC were the ones responsible for victory, especially Mountbatten and Leese. His own writings and comments bear this out. In a 28 September 1944 speech to the House of Commons about the victory at Imphal and Kohima, Churchill said "the campaign of Admiral Mountbatten on the Burma frontier constitutes ...the largest and most important ground fighting that has yet taken place against the armies of Japan...and has resulted in the slaughter of between 50,000 and 60,000 Japanese."¹⁸⁵ And, in a letter to his wife on 6 April 1945, just as Slim had won his crushing victories at Meiktila and Mandalay, Churchill said "The advances have been wonderful...Dickey, reinforced by Oliver Leese, has done wonders in Burma."¹⁸⁶ Churchill even credited Wingate over Slim for the revitalization of the British-Indian Army when he issued a 24 July 1943 directive that said, "There is

no doubt that in the welter of inefficiency and lassitude which has characterized our own operations on the Indian front, this man (Wingate), his force and his achievements stand out."¹⁸⁷ However, to Churchill's great credit, he changed his mind about Slim.

During World War II, Churchill was the only senior British military leader who wanted to pursue vigorously the reconquest of Burma. Alanbrooke, considered by many to be one of the best, if not the best, grand strategist of World War II, wanted to throw Britain's weight into supporting the American drive across the Pacific by using Australia as the base of operations. He considered everything else peripheral. Churchill, on the other hand, thought Britain's efforts must be based out of India. Thus her forces should be used to reconquer Burma and Malaya. He saw this as a distinctly British effort and wanted to regain the lost colonies in Southeast Asia. The fact that Britain had no other base in the region than India, and the lightning drive across the Pacific by the U.S. made this a moot argument. Consequently, Burma was Britain's 'big show' in the Pacific. As a result, SEAC got a lot of Churchill's attention. And so did Slim, but only after he had proven himself with a succession brilliant victories, victories even Churchill couldn't ignore.¹⁸⁸ In *Triumph and Tragedy*, one of his volumes on the Second World War, Churchill finally gave Slim the credit he was due: "The famous Fourteenth Army, under the masterly command of General Slim, fought valiantly, overcame all obstacles, and achieved the seemingly impossible."¹⁸⁹

Slim encountered his "glass ceilings" because he was from the Indian Army. He was pulled through them because enough of his superiors had the vision and courage to recognize his great talent and leadership. Some would say it was luck. Others would say it was a luck that Slim made by his extraordinary generalship.

And In Conclusion...

Reflections on the generalship of Field Marshal Slim usually end up concentrating on two points: the truly distinguished qualities of the man, and his stunning accomplishments in World War II. Certainly when his achievements are placed in context of the environment in which he operated, they become that much more remarkable. They are indeed nothing less than this. He assumed command of a corps half way through the longest retreat in the British Army's history. Even though he was unable to reverse the disaster, he kept his corps intact and led it to safety. Then, despite virtually no resources and several inept senior commanders, he rebuilt this force into an army that was able to fight its way through 1000 miles of the most inhospitable, disease-ridden country in the world. In the process they crossed two very wide and defended rivers. This army, the most unusual and polyglot in World War II, fought the toughest opponent any Ally fought in that war, an opponent so tough that it had no medals for valor. Japan considered it every soldier's duty to give his life for his emperor and country, and the great majority of the time he did. In this context, Slim's accomplishments rival those of Patton and Manstein. As great as Slim's victories were, his growth as a general is equally, if not more impressive.

When he was whisked away to Burma from the 10th Indian Division in Iraq in March of '42, Slim was a competent general. By the time his army captured Mandalay and Meiktila, Slim was a true strategic leader. He was a master of the operational level of strategy, both defensively and offensively. He never lost sight of the fundamental aim of war, the destruction of the enemy army. His

understanding of administration and its role in war was the foundation on which he achieved his victories. His ability to plan and control a battle was first rate. His flexibility and ability to rapidly adapt were superb, as witnessed in his change of Operation CAPITAL into EXTENDED CAPITAL. His grasp of the importance of air power, especially for resupply and troop movements, set the standard for others to emulate. General Nye effectively sums up Slim's achievements:

I do not think Slim could have achieved what he did if he had not been a highly educated and balanced soldier and not least in administrative matters which, of course, were the essentials in Burma. He was a man who could move with the times and adapt himself to the conditions. But these qualifications would not have meant a thing if he had not been the man he was. You can be a highly educated soldier but, when in command of troops and the human factor is there, it is human qualities and personality that either have an effect or they do not. Slim had inspired confidence in the men at a time of virtual disaster and the troops in Burma would never have done what they did without the leadership from the top. I would say that Slim's feats in Burma should not be recognized just as something that came about, but they should be judged by what he did with what he had—or to be more accurate—with what he had not. He was always at the bottom of the scale of priorities—he never had enough to do what he had to do and this, I think, is the measure of his greatness.¹⁹⁰

As great as his accomplishments were, Slim's leadership and character have proven more memorable. By any method of evaluation used, he met the 'Wavell Standard'. He was able to withstand the shocks of war with robustness and a great sense of humor. This was especially true during the dark times, the '42 retreat and the First Arakan campaign.

He demonstrated his moral courage time and again, especially in the face of affronts from less gifted commanders like Irwin and Leese. He refused to accept anything less than a total commitment to the welfare and training of his soldiers from his subordinates and himself.

His professional knowledge--his grasp of strategy, tactics and administration--was nowhere more evident than in his ability to comprehend why he had been defeated in '42, devise a plan to fix the shortcomings, and implement the plan. Equally impressive was his handling of the battles of Imphal and Kohima where, despite early mistakes, he did not panic. He put his theories in practice, especially the use of air resupply and air movement of troops, and won a great victory. However, the finest example is his conduct of Operations CAPITAL and EXTENDED CAPITAL. Here Slim got inside the decision cycle of his opponent and inflicted on them a victory of Napoleonic proportion: in two battles he destroyed the Japanese Army in Burma.

Slim knew soldiers. He was one of them and they understood that. And he understood morale and its effect on an army. This quality is even more impressive given the racial and ethnic diversity of his army and the leadership talent required to lead such a diverse force. Slim never forgot that war's results are inflicted on human beings, not on some symbol on a map. He was driven by a deep sense of responsibility to train his soldiers with the necessary skills and tactics that would enable them to accomplish their mission, to equip them with the proper resources for success, and to be honest with them by 'telling them like it is'. His soldiers' response to his efforts was a series of victories unequalled in World War II.

He was a stern and fair disciplinarian. Slim fired commanders when necessary, but he did it because of their poor performance not because he was looking for a scapegoat. The most vivid example of this was his success in reducing the incidents of sickness and disease in his command from over 80% to about 1%. This was achieved because of discipline, fairly administered and rigorously adhered to.

Slim was a tremendous "picker of subordinates". The achievements of Snelling, Messervy and Cowan resulted directly from his willingness to empower his subordinates, and from the command climate in his army.

Further, Slim interacted very successfully with politicians while he was CIGS. He understood that both the soldier and the politician are essential for war. This helped him steer the British Army through a period of downsizing after the war, while still providing a credible force to his nation.

Finally, Slim made his own luck. He learned early on to take the bold course of action. Because of this, he won Imphal, Kohima, Mandalay and Meiktila.

Almost everyone who wrote about their encounters with Slim, however brief they were, reports favorably on his generalship. Lord Erroll of Hale, a LTC in Burma, recounts that:

Altogether I had three or four interviews with General Slim and what impressed me most was the manner in which he put a very junior officer like myself at ease immediately and his calm and collected manner at critical moments.

One occasion when I asked to see him was when 14 Army Headquarters was at Monywa, at the time 20 Division was fighting hard for the crossing at Myinmu.

He was seated at a table in a tent and when I entered I noticed he had some papers in his hand. Looking up, he said—'Well, Erroll, how are you?' and putting the papers aside, added, 'I am just correcting some proofs of an article I am writing for the *Birmingham Post*.'

Considerably astonished, I said—'But really, sir, I can hardly believe it! Surely the big battle going on must be causing you a great deal of anxiety.'

Pausing for a moment and then looking straight at me with his determined jaw stuck out, General Slim replied: 'There is nothing more I can do. I have done all I can and must now sit back and let everybody get on with their part. Of course, I would love to be out there with them and to know exactly how things are going, but that's not my job—so I might just as well get on with this while I am waiting.'

I can see the picture now. He was so completely relaxed and confident.¹⁹¹

Another was reported from a staff officer of the 19th Indian Division watching Slim launch the pursuit to Rangoon:

. . . I stood back, wishing I had a camera, as Slim, 4 Corps Commander (Frank Messervy) and three divisional commanders watched the leading division crash past the start point. The dust thickened under the trees lining the road until the column was motoring into a thunderous yellow tunnel, first the tanks, infantry all over them, then trucks filled with men, then more tanks going fast, nose to tail, guns, more trucks, more guns — British, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Madrassis, Pathans . . . this was the old Indian Army, going down to the attack, for the last time in history, exactly two hundred years after the Honourable East India Company had enlisted its first ten sepoys on the Coromandel Coast.¹⁹²

And finally, we have Major General Mansergh's account; he was Commander of the 11th East Africa Division. He recalls:

How our Indian prisoners-of-war (located in Singapore) mounted small guards armed with sticks on their camps, and how they would smartly present arms with these sticks. One day (Mansergh) walked with General Slim into a camp where many Indians were dying of tuberculosis. Slim and Mansergh went from hut to hut, and were deeply moved by the wonderful gratitude, and loyalty of these Indians, who were happy now that they had seen their General.¹⁹³

Many British war historians have compared their two greatest World War II generals, Slim and Montgomery. In every case, the authors conclude that while Montgomery displayed tremendous talents as a general and merits great credit for his ability to plan and conduct operations involving thousands of troops and tanks and massive air resources, Slim is the one to study as the model of leadership. Montgomery is seen as a general from the old school of British generalship, formed in World War I. He was a master of the set piece battle with a goal of limited gains with minimum casualties. Major risks were not welcomed. Slim, on the other hand, had to operate in an environment where he had to improvise, develop new methods of fighting and take risks to be successful. Finally, compared with Montgomery's pettiness and egocentric nature, Slim's character, especially his humanity, make him the model for leadership.¹⁹⁴

The U.S. Army needs to follow the British lead. We should use Slim as a model of both generalship and leadership. He would make a fitting addition to the proper study of Joshua Chamberlain and George Marshall. He would as well counteract some of the recent propensity to be enamored with the German generals of World War II, who, as a U.S. officer recently observed, "might have been great generals, but they lost". Slim was a great leader. And he won big.

A final consideration: In *Burma 1942-1945*, Raymond Callahan concludes that the victory in Burma was, in the big picture of World War II, just a side show. After their defeat at Imphal and Kohima, the Japanese were content to stay on the defensive in Burma. In retrospect, the Allies could have left them there to wither on the vine. Additionally, the reconquest of Burma was the twilight of the Indian Army. Three years after World War II, both Burma and India were given their independence. Against this backdrop, Callahan says that Slim's victories enabled the British, unlike the French and Dutch, to leave Asia with some dignity, and that was no small thing.¹⁹⁵ Whatever the geo-political outcome was of the Burma campaign, Slim's accomplishments there were magnificent.

Burma was Slim's victory. Yet, in his genuinely human way, he gave real credit to his soldiers by saying

I have written much of generals and of staff officers; of their problems, difficulties, and expedients, their successes and their failures. Yet there is one thought that I should like to be the overall and final impression of this book—that the war in Burma was a *soldiers'* war. There comes a moment in every battle against a stubborn enemy when the result hangs in the balance. Then the general, however skillful and far-sighted he may have been, must hand over to his soldiers, to the men in the ranks and to their regimental officers, and leave them to complete what he has begun. The issue then rests with them, on their courage, their hardihood, their refusal to be beaten either by the cruel hazards of nature or by the fierce strength of their human enemy. That moment came early and often in the fighting in Burma; sometimes it came when tired, sick men felt alone, when it would have been so easy for them to

give up, when only will, discipline, and faith could steel them to carry on. To the soldiers of many races who, in the comradeship of the Fourteenth Army, *did* go on, and to the airmen who flew with them and fought over them, belongs the true glory of achievement. It was they who turned Defeat into Victory.¹⁹⁶

The price had been high--40,000 killed and wounded, 237,000 sick. His army had fought for a just cause and liberated a nation. It had fulfilled the words on the memorial to the British and Indian soldiers who fell at Imphal/Kohima:

When you go home
Tell them of us, and say:
For your tomorrow
We gave our today.¹⁹⁷

Despite his encounters with "glass ceilings", Field Marshal William J. Slim fulfilled Sun Tzu's definition of command. He must rightfully be referred to as 'the respected one'. But in the 14th Army, the 'respected one' was called 'Uncle Bill'.

END NOTES

- ¹ David Mason, Who's Who in World War II, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 287.
- ² A. J. Barker, The March on Delhi (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 72.
- ³ While Urdu is a tribal language in India, it has become, by default, the standard "military language" because there are so many different sects, tribes and races in the Indian Army. This excludes the famed Gurkhas who spoke a separate language, Gurkhali.
- ⁴ William J. Slim, Defeat Into Victory, (London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1956), 110.
- ⁵ Raymond Callahan, "Tale of Two Generals - Monty versus Slim," World War II, May 1990, 41.
- ⁶ E.T. Williams and C.S. Nicholls, eds., The Dictionary of National Biography, 1961-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 959.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ L. James Binder, ed., Front and Center, Heroes, War Stories and Army Life (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1991), 57-58.
- ⁹ Ronald Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer (London: Leo Cooper, 1979), 29.
- ¹⁰ Philip Mason, A Matter of Honor (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 428.
- ¹¹ Williams, The Dictionary of National Biography, 957-959.
- ¹² Geoffrey Evans, Slim as Military Commander (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1969), 13.
- ¹³ General Sir Archibald Wavell, Generals and Generalship (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1941), 1.
- ¹⁴ Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 14.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Wavell, Generals and Generalship, 2.
- ¹⁹ Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 15.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Wavell, Generals and Generalship, 17.

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- 23 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 15.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Wavell, Generals and Generalship, 34
- 29 Ibid., 9.
- 30 Ibid., 6.
- 31 William J. Slim, "Higher Command in War," Military Review, LXX (May 1990): 11.
- 32 Ibid., 11-17.
- 33 Ibid., 17-20.
- 34 Ibid., 20-21.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 59-60.
- 37 Michael Calvert, Slim (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1973), 25.
- 38 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 27.
- 39 Bisheshwar Prasad, ed., The Reconquest of Burma, vol. I of Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45, (Delhi: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1954), xxv.
- 40 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 170.
- 41 Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Stilwell's Command Problems, vol of China-Burma-India Theater, United States Army in World War II, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1956), 11.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 A.J. Barker, The March on Delhi, 29.
- 44 Lewin, Slim. The Standardbearer, 128.
- 45 Barker, The March on Delhi, 44.
- 46 Philip Ziegler, Mountbatten (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 231.
- 47 Ibid., 270.

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- 48 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 135.
- 49 Barker, The March on Delhi, 47.
- 50 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 237.
- 51 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 140.
- 52 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 273.
- 53 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 162.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid., 269.
- 56 Christopher Sykes, Orde Wingate (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), passim. The term Chindit was the mispronunciation of the Burmese word for lion and referred to the lion statues that guarded the various temples throughout Burma.
- 57 Lewin, Slim The Standardbearer, 132-133.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 192.
- 60 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 250.
- 61 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 128.
- 62 Joseph W. Stilwell, The Stilwell Papers (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948), 75.
- 63 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 51.
- 64 Ibid., 161-162.
- 65 Ibid., 216, 269.
- 66 Lewin, Slim The Standardbearer, 143-144.
- 67 Arthur E. Lykke, ed., Military Strategy: Theory and Application, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1989), 3-4.
- 68 Bisheshwar Prasad, ed., The Retreat from Burma, vol of Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45 (Delhi: Sree Sarawaty Press, Ltd, 1952), 346.
- 69 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 115.
- 70 Ibid., chap. VI passim
- 71 Ibid., 142-143.

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- 72 S. Woodburn Kirby, The Decisive Battles, vol. III of The War Against Japan, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1961), 127.
- 73 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 165.
- 74 Ibid., 189.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 269.
- 77 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 305.
- 78 See:
- Arthur Swinson, The Battle of Kohima, (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), 243.
 - John Toland, The Rising Sun (New York: Random House, 1970), 614.
- 79 Sykes, Orde Wingate, 522.
- 80 Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed., Carl Von Clausewitz: On War (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 596-597.
- 81 Sun Tzu, The Art of War, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).
- 82 It is interesting to note how Allied planning capabilities had matured as the war progressed. Both of the plans had been in the final developmental stages well before the final outcome of the battles of Imphal and Kohima had been determined.
- 83 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 375.
- 84 S. Woodburn Kirby, The Reconquest of Burma, vol. IV of The War Against Japan, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965), 416.
- 85 Mason, A Matter of Honour, 507.
- 86 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 348. By the time this plan was executed, Stilwell's luck and Chiang Ki-shek's patience had run out. Chiang persuaded Roosevelt to recall his cantankerous warrior in October 1944. He was replaced by three U.S. generals: Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer became Chiang's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Daniel Sultan assumed command of the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), and Lieutenant General Raymond Wheeler became Deputy Commander, SEAC.
- 87 The defeats at Imphal and Kohima had been a disaster for Japanese military leadership. Mutaguchi had relieved all three of his division commanders during the battle, and was himself relieved along with his Chief of Staff after the battle. Lieutenant General Kawabe, Burma Area Army Commander, was also replaced by Lieutenant General Kimura. These actions were unprecedented in the Japanese Army up to that time.
- 88 E.D. Smith, Battle for Burma (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), 129.
- 89 Barker, The March on Delhi, 207.
- 90 Louis Allen, Burma. The Longest War 1941-45 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 391.

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- 91 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 184.
- 92 Ibid., 187.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 William J. Slim, Campaign of the Fourteenth Army 1944-45 n.p., 8, quoted in Bisheshwar Prasad, ed., The Arakan Operations 1942-45, vol. Campaigns in the Eastern Theater of Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45 (Delhi: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1954), 161.
- 95 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 187.
- 96 See
- J.G. Elliott, Unfading Honor. The Story of the Indian Army, 1939-1945, (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1965), 328-329.
 - Evans, Slim as Military Commander, chap XI passim.
- 97 Bitumenised hessian, in appearance not unlike oil cloth and made up in rolls 50 yards long by one yard wide. Originally supplied for making temporary, all weather air strips, it was equally suitable for roads. Careful preliminary work was necessary if it was to last, and this took time. The ground had to be bone-dry, packed and shaped to make a camber and then strips stretched and ironed out by roller. Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 190n.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 395-396.
- 100 Ibid., 396.
- 101 Geoffrey Evans, The Desert and the Jungle (London: William Kimber, 1959), 187.
- 102 M.R Roberts Golden Arrow: The Story of the 7th Indian Division in the Second World War, 1939-1945, (London: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1952), 173.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 448-450.
- 105 Bisheshwar Prasad, ed., The Reconquest of Burma, vol II of Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, 1939-45, (Delhi: Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1954), 362.
- 106 Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, Time Runs Out In CBI, vol of China-Burma-India Theater. United States Army in World War II, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959), 220.
- 107 Lewin, Slim The Standardbearer, 210.
- 108 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 139.
- 109 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 126.
- 110 Kirby, The Reconquest of Burma, 159.

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- 111 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 136-137.
- 112 L. James Binder, ed., Front and Center. Heroes. War Stories. & Army Life (New York: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1991), 65.
- 113 Wavell, Generals and Generalship, 1.
- 114 Howard and Paret, Carl Von Clausewitz. On War, 100.
- 115 Smith, Battle for Burma, 181.
- 116 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 69.
- 117 William J. Slim, Unofficial History, (London: Cassel, 1959), 148.
- 118 Ibid., 164.
- 119 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 109.
- 120 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 28.
- 121 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 134.
- 122 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 545-546.
- 123 Ibid., 182.
- 124 Ibid., 183.
- 125 Ibid., 184
- 126 Ibid., 194. A classic example of this injunction to 'improvise it ourselves' was the novel use of 'parajutes'. These improvised parachutes made of paper or jute were developed as a result of the severe shortage of silk parachutes in theater caused by SEAC low priority,. Since air resupply was so vital, Slim's challenged the business community in Calcutta to come up with a viable substitute. They did, and their 'parajutes' made large scale air resupply work.
- 127 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 87.
- 128 Edward Fischer, The Chancy War, (New York: Orion Books, 1991), 147.
- 129 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 187.
- 130 Mason, A Matter of Honour, 512.
- 131 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 195.
- 132 Ibid., 192.
- 133 Ibid., 193.
- 134 Ibid., 542-543.

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- 135 Ibid., 177-180.
- 136 Ibid., 178, 345.
- 137 David Fraser, And We Shall Shock Them, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983), 376.
- 138 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 68-69.
- 139 William Boyd Sinclair, Confusion Beyond Imagination, Book Ten of China-Burma-India in World War II (Coeur d'Alene, Idaho: Joe F. Whitley, Publisher, 1991), 67.
- 140 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 115.
- 141 Ibid., 106.
- 142 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 169.
- 143 Ibid., 389.
- 144 Ibid., 390. Rees had been unfairly sacked by his Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Gott because he disagreed with Gott's dispositions for Tobruk (John Connell, Auchinleck, pp. 610-11 quoted in Allen, Burma The Longest War 1941-45, 389fn.
- 145 Ibid., 368.
- 146 Ibid., 138.
- 147 Ibid., 209-210.
- 148 Ibid., 221.
- 149 Ibid., 289 as quoted in Allen, The Longest War, 394-395.
- 150 Evans, Slim as Military Commander, 214.
- 151 Ibid., 107.
- 152 Ibid., 215.
- 153 Mason, A Matter of Honor, book jacket.
- 154 Barker, The March on Delhi, 27-28.
- 155 Slim, Unofficial History, 156.
- 156 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 51, 51, 82.
- 157 Byron Farwell, The Gurkhas, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 213.
- 158 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 111-112.
- 159 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 105.

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- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Ibid., 116.
- 162 Ibid., 119.
- 163 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 151.
- 164 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 123.
- 165 OCH Irwin to Slim, 10 May 1943, Irwin Papers, quoted in Allen, Burma. The Longest War 1941-45, 112.
- 166 Irwin to Wavell, 9 April 1943, Irwin Papers, quoted in Allen, Burma. The Longest War 1941-45, 109.
- 167 Ibid., 114.
- 168 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 124.
- 169 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 293.
- 170 See:
- John Keegan ed., Churchill's Generals, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 218-219.
- Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 385.
- 171 Callahan, Burma 1942-1945, 156.
- 172 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 290, 293.
- 173 Ibid., 290.
- 174 See:
- Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 238.
- Ziegler, Mountbatten, 293-294.
- 175 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 239.
- 176 Ziegler, Mountbatten, 294.
- 177 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 239.
- 178 See:
- Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 243-245.
- Ziegler, Mountbatten, 294-295.
- 179 Keegan, Churchill's Generals, 220.
- 180 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 261-265, 273.
- 181 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 539. Another compelling example of the efficiency of the Indian division is the fact that it consumed 120 tons of daily supplies versus a British division which consumed over 400 tons a day.

182 Keegan, Churchill's Generals, 311-312.

183 It is interesting to note that Nigel Hamilton, Montgomery's biographer, says that one of the reasons Montgomery did not like the Indian Army was his unsuccessful attempt to join it when he first came on active duty. This bitter disappointment seems to have stayed with him his entire army career.

184 Lewin, Slim the Standardbearer, 3.

185 Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, vol. VII, Road to Victory 1941-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), 977.

186 Ibid., 1283.

187 Allen, Burma The Longest War 1941-45, 149.

188 Keegan, Churchill's Generals, 99, 299-300.

189 Winston S. Churchill, Triumph and Tragedy, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 621.

190 Evans, Slim as Military Commander Slim as Military Commander, 212.

191 Ibid., 215.

192 Callahan, Burma 1942-1945, 159.

193 Antony Brett-James, Ball of Fire, (London: Aldershot, Gale & Polden Ltd, 1951), 438.

194 See:

- Raymond Callahan, "Tale of Two Generals - Monty versus Slim" World War II, (May 1991): 34-41.
- Ronald Lewin, Montgomery as Military Commander, (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 350-351.

195 Callahan, Burma 1942-1945, 162-164.

196 Slim, Defeat Into Victory, 551.

197 Allen, Burma The Longest War 1941-45, 635.

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